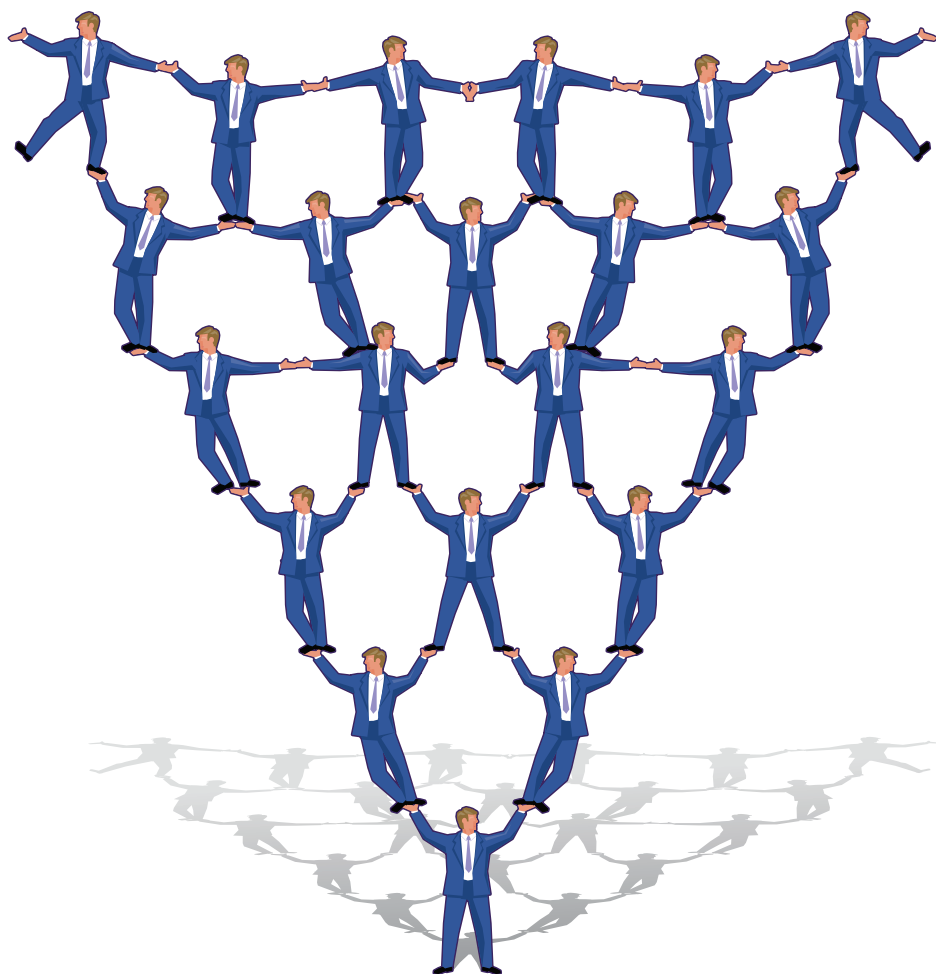


NATALIA HAKIMI

# Leader Empowering Behaviour: The Leader's Perspective

## Understanding the Motivation behind Leader Empowering Behaviour



## **Leader Empowering Behaviour: The Leader's Perspective**

Understanding the motivation behind leader empowering behaviour

Natalia Hakimi



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Understanding the motivation behind leader empowering behaviour

**Leider empowering gedrag: de leiders perspectief**

Begrijpen de motivatie achter leiders empowering gedrag

Proefschrift

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Promotor: Prof.dr. D.L. van Knippenberg

Overige leden: Dr. D. van Dierendonck  
Prof.dr. D. De Cremer  
Dr. M. Ryan

Co-promotor: Dr. S. Giessner

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Leadership has been a favourite topic for scholars and people in general for several decades (Yukl, 2004). Leadership is, indeed, a powerful force that puzzled scholars for hundreds of years. Thousands of researchers from different disciplines like management, psychology, sociology or political sciences have, therefore, tried to understand its nature. Social psychologists are responsible for a great part of the available knowledge in the phenomenon of leadership. Their contribution has built an impressive vault of knowledge concerning leadership and its many aspects and forms. It is also from a social psychological point of view that we will approach and define leadership in this dissertation. In this analysis, leadership is defined as a process of social influences in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.

The past decades, forms of leadership that are motivational in nature have emerged and changed researchers' and practitioners' vision of leadership. To be as effective as possible, leaders are expected to inspire and motivate their followers rather than purely control and direct them (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002). This makes employee empowerment an important criterion for leadership effectiveness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). Empowered employees are given more autonomy and more responsibilities about their work. Consequently, an important question to answer in developing our understanding of effective leadership is what motivates leaders to empower their followers.

To understand the processes underlying leadership effectiveness, early research in leadership and leadership effectiveness focused on leaders' traits or behaviours that would lead to effective leadership (Fleischman & Peters, 1962; Fiedler, 1964). This particular attention for leaders is logic as leaders, being in a powerful position, are more apt to enable changes than followers are. Researchers have then tried to answer the question of when and under which conditions should leaders show certain behaviours to motivate their followers on the most effective way (Chemers, 2000). However, as research has focused on the way leaders do and should influence their subordinates, little is known about the way leaders are influenced themselves by their subordinates and the organisational context. Yet, if the leader-follower relationship is an interdependent relationship where both actors (the leader and the follower) are responsible for the reaction (Lagace, 1990; Castleberry & Tanner, 1986), the same applies for the organisational context, as not only the followers but also the leaders are influenced by it. Therefore, it still remains to be understood why leaders show certain behaviours and how certain leaders' trait influence their empowering behaviour. Indeed, it is not only interesting to understand both sides of the relationship, it is also important to understand how leaders themselves react to certain situations and how this affect their behaviour. As Hollander (1958) argued

that leadership effectiveness depends on followers' perceptions, we argue that the way leaders perceive and experience their subordinates and their environment must greatly influence the effectiveness of the leader and his/her leadership style. Furthermore, it is reasonable to expect that leaders may differ in the way they experience and react to their followers and to different organisational contexts.

Therefore, the research question that serves as a common thread in this dissertation is the following:

*What are the antecedents of leader empowering behaviour?*

### **Empowerment**

Over the past decades, the need for companies to adapt themselves to the new economic market has meant a need to change their leadership style from a directive leadership style to a more motivational leadership style (Bass, 1990, Yukl, 2002). Leaders are no longer seen as solely controlling employees, they also need to enhance employees' motivation and foster their individual development at work. In her seminal theory of structural power in organization (1977), Rosabeth Kanter suggested that individuals display different behaviours depending on whether certain structural supports (power and opportunity) were in place. Empowered individuals create an effective work unit within the organization while powerless individuals are more rigid, rules minded and less committed to the achievement of the goals of the organization. Indeed, empowered employees can access and mobilize support, information, resources and opportunities and therefore afford more flexibility to achieve organizational goals than those individuals who lack control over their margin of action and are dependent on others (Kanter, 1977; 1993). This process of empowerment has been shown to be beneficial for both the employee and the company as empowered employees are more adaptive to the different work situations (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1996; Manz and

Sims, 1987). A search in PiCarta reveals that an impressive 7831 books and articles have been written on the topic, offering managers techniques, methods and reasons to empower their employees. Yet, empowerment programmes often fail to meet the expectations of either the manager or the employee (Argyris, 1998; Forrester, 2000), suggesting that still a lot has to be understood on the topic.

Two main definitions of empowerment have emerged from the literature. The first describes empowerment as a relational construct. In this definition, empowerment is a transfer of power from the one who has more, the leader, to the one who has less, the subordinate (Forrester, 2000). This approach defines empowerment in the organizational context and focuses on the behaviour of the leader. This relational approach to empowerment aims at reducing the dependencies that make it difficult to get the job done by delegating power from the leader to the follower (Burke, 1986; Lawler, 1992; Leach, Wall, & Jackson, 2003). The second approach defines empowerment as a motivational construct. The second approach, however, focuses on the consequences of leader's behaviour and defines empowerment as a four-dimensional psychological state based on followers' perceptions of (a) meaningfulness – the feeling that their work is personally important – (b) competence – the confidence in their ability to perform tasks well – (c) self-determination – the freedom to choose how they perform their tasks –and (d) impact – the influence in their work role – (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Leach et al., 2003; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

In the present dissertation we aim to understand the antecedents and the consequences of relational empowerment. Because in this dissertation we focused on the dyadic relationship between the leader and the follower, we used the empowerment definition as developed by Konczak, Stelly, and Trusty (2000). Konczak et al. (2000) identified six dimensions of leader empowering behaviour: delegation of authority, accountability, self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development, and coaching for innovative performance.

The first dimension focuses on the core of the empowerment process, which is the delegation of authority, as empowering means granting power. By redistributing power, empowering leaders place new responsibilities on their followers for which they must be held accountable. Indeed, as Conger (1989) states it, empowering followers implies that companies must adjust their performance evaluation system in such a way that the follower has to feel accountable for the newly own responsibilities. The second dimension captures this. Another important aspect of empowerment is that by empowering employees, leaders enhance their sense of self-efficacy. The third dimension therefore focuses on the extent to which leaders encourage independent thinking and decision-making. Research on empowerment has also identified that leaders must share information with their followers in order to enable their followers to contribute optimally to the organization (Ford & Fottler, 1995). The fourth dimension accounts for this. The fifth dimension concentrates on the leaders' effort to develop the skill of their followers. Indeed, the role of an empowering leader has been described as a facilitating role rather than a controlling one. To do so, leaders must continually ensure that their followers possess the right skills to perform optimally. Finally, the last dimension captures the leaders' behaviours that encourage calculated risk taking and ideas. Indeed, empowering leaders must ensure followers' flexibility by giving them the room to make mistakes and help them treat mistakes as learning opportunities and help them reduce their recurrence.

### ***Trust***

To understand the empowerment process we should not neglect the element of risk that is inherent to empowering employees. This element of risk implies that leaders must be willing to put themselves in a vulnerable position by sharing power and responsibilities with their followers. For this reason, leaders must be able to trust that their

followers will not take advantage of their newly powerful position. It is important to notice that implicit to the definition of trust is that trust is needed only in situations where there is uncertainty about the actions that will be undertaken by others. In other words, trust is needed in situations where the action of the trustee could have significant consequences to those involved. Empowerment is such a situation as once leaders empower their followers, they enable them to take decisions that could have considerable consequences for the leaders' ability to meet their targets.

As Mayer, Schoorman and Davis (1995) define it, trust is 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor'. This character-based approach of trust focuses on the trustor perception of the trustee' character (Mayer et al., 1995). In this perspective, the trust concerns of the leaders – the trustor – are important as the empowered follower – the trustee – can take decisions that could significantly affect the leader's ability to reach his/her goal. The leader needs therefore to make inferences about the follower's characteristics that are relevant for the leader. Studies of trust have identified several attributes or behaviours that are associated with trust in the follower. Two types of indicators have been consistently identified among these studies: indicators of the competence (ability) of the target and indicators of the values and moral ethics of the target (integrity) (Ammeter, Douglas, Ferris, & Goka, 2004; Mayer et al., 1995). Butler and Cantrell (1984) found that ability and integrity are the most important attributes in deciding whether to trust an individual. Also, Brower et al. (2000), basing themselves on a review of two relational theories of leadership and trust, proposed in a model of relational leadership that leaders' perception of their followers' trustworthiness is positively related to empowering behaviour. Being vulnerable means that a significant potential loss exists for the individual (Deutsch, 1973). In the context of empowerment, the willingness to trust, and therefore to be vulnerable,

may be moderated by several factors. Recent research on trust has highlighted the social-psychological nature of the phenomenon of interpersonal trust. Trust is dependent on the perception that an individual (the trustor) has about another individual (the target) and on the social context that they are in. Therefore, the function but also the foundation of trust is social (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). As a result, we can expect social contextual factors as well as individual differences to moderate the relation between trust and empowering leader behaviour.

It is important to realize that the character-based approach of trust we use throughout this dissertation differs from the trust definition as defined in the leader-member-exchange (LMX) model. According to LMX theory, the relationship between the leader and the follower means that both parties operate on the basis of mutual trust and goodwill, with both parties having obligations towards each other that go beyond the economic contract between the two parties. This social exchange implies a high quality relationship between the leader and the follower where both parties care and have consideration for each other. It is therefore critical to understand this distinction as the two perspectives imply two totally different type of trust building in the workplace. Also, it is important to understand that in this thesis, we have a different focus on the dyadic relationship between the leader and the follower than the one of LMX researchers. LMX theory suggests that leaders differentiate how they work with each subordinate and develop a dyadic relationship with each of them (Schriesheim, Casro, & Cogliser, 1999). LMX-theory is a relationship-based approach to leadership developed by Graen et al. over three decades ago and had its early roots in the vertical dyad linkage theory (VDL). The basic premise of VDL theory was that leaders differentiate between subordinates in the way that they supervise them (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) such that the leader develops a much closer relationship with some subordinates (in-group) and gives them more “negotiating latitude” than other subordinates (out-group) (Dansereau et al., 1975). LMX theory emphasizes the implicit social exchange (transaction) that exists between



the leader and his/her followers, including reciprocal influence and interpersonal perception. This approach of dyadic leadership differs from other theories of leadership that address generalized leader behaviours and traits to all followers (Brower et al., 2000). This approach, indeed, emphasizes the significance of followers' perceptions of the leader (Brower et al, 2000; House & Aditya, 1997). Contingency theories have also focused on the quality of the leader-follower relationship (Chemer, 2000; Yukl, 2001). However, the emphasis is again on the leader's behaviour as a source of satisfaction to subordinates and followers play a rather passive role. Indeed, like most leadership models LMX research study the influence of leader's behaviour on follower's behaviour.

The question is thus the following: what motivates leaders to empower their subordinates and how does this process work? Understanding these processes will broaden our theoretical understanding of the leadership processes. Indeed, until now, leadership effectiveness has been explained by looking solely on the way followers are influenced by their leaders' behaviour and characteristics. We aim to get new insight in leadership effectiveness by discovering predictors of leader's behaviour. By doing so we would like to understand the antecedents and consequences of the empowerment processes between leader and follower.

### ***Overview of the Dissertation***

The present dissertation tries to shed light on the phenomenon of empowering leadership. We aim to understand the antecedents of leader empowering behaviour. In doing so, we mean to remedy the stated lack of research on empowering leadership and on the effect of follower's behaviour on leader's behaviour. In this dissertation we will argue that follower's behaviour can be expected to play an important role in explaining leader's empowering behaviour.

This dissertation consists of several chapters. We report the findings of 4 laboratory studies and two field studies in chapters 2 to 4.

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Although those chapters form a coherent whole, they can also be read as independent articles. Chapter 5 consist of a summary of the findings of the previous chapters.

**Chapter 2:** the central aim of this chapter was to make a first step in our reasoning by establishing trust as an antecedent of leader empowering behaviour and showing that leader's characteristics moderate the influence of trust in the empowering process. We focused on leader's individual characteristics (conscientiousness) and leader's trust in their follower's integrity and performance as antecedents of leader empowering behaviour. We tested our Hypothesis in two laboratory studies: an experimental study (Study 1) and a scenario study (Study 2). We predicted that leader's empowering behaviour depends not only on the trust leaders have in their follower's performance and integrity but also on the characteristics of the leader: leader's conscientiousness.

**Chapter 3:** In this chapter we investigated the influence of trust and epistemic motivation in the empowering process. We focused on two aspects of epistemic motivation: accountability and workload. Leaders are daily faced with situations that may influence their desire to take thorough versus hasty decisions. In the context of empowering leadership, this may mean that, depending on their level of epistemic motivation, leaders may be more or less motivated to take into consideration the trustworthiness of their followers. We tested these Hypotheses in three studies. We first manipulated accountability (Study 1) and workload (Study 2) in two different scenario studies in order draw conclusions about causality. We then tested the occurrence of the predicted relationships in the field (Study 3) determining the independent contribution of the predicted relationships in the empowering process.

**Chapter 4:** In this chapter we focused on the role of gender in the empowering process. We also emphasised the mediating role of trust in

the process. The central aim of this paper is to understand how gender affects the motivation behind leader empowering behaviour in order to reach a better understanding of the phenomenon behind leadership effectiveness. Gender has been widely studied in the context of the organizations and research has shown that male and female leaders are subject to different pressures, forcing female leaders to justify more than men that they are qualified leaders. We predicted that this would affect the willingness of female leaders to be in a vulnerable position, especially those who are more motivated to do well. In a second step, we also examined the influence of the predicted relationship on two outcomes variables: follower's job satisfaction and follower's organizational commitment.

**Chapter 5:** This chapter consists in a summary of the main findings of chapters 2 to 4 and aimed at integrating them in a comprehensive conclusion. In this chapter, we will find a general discussion on the antecedents of leader empowering behaviour where the strengths and weaknesses of the present research are thoroughly discussed. This should provide the reader with practical implications and future research opportunities.

### ***What can you expect in this dissertation?***

Reading the present dissertation may be interesting for both practitioners and researchers. Researchers in the field of leadership in general and those interested in empowerment in particular may find interesting the unusual look we take on leadership in this thesis. Throughout this dissertation we take a new perspective on empowerment by looking at the motivation behind leader empowering behaviour and therefore make a significant contribution towards a way of thinking that reaches outside previous paradigms. By doing so, we open a research agenda and provide for numerous opportunities for new research. We

therefore hope that the present research will also help enrich the respective approaches of leadership studies and hereby lead to a more informed understanding of leadership effectiveness.

Practitioners should find this dissertation interesting as this research shows that organisations would greatly benefit by acknowledging the role of leaders and organisations in the empowerment process. We focus in this dissertation in the motivation behind leaders' empowering behaviour, concentrating on situational variables that are relevant for every organisation. This may help organisations to adjust their work environment in a more optimal way and give practitioners new insights in how they can improve empowerment practices at work. In this dissertation, practitioners can also get some insight on the leaders' characteristics that are of importance when selecting their leaders.



## Chapter 2

### Leader Empowering Behaviour: The Leader's Perspective

*Leader empowering behaviour is an important criterion for leadership effectiveness. However, virtually no research has studied the antecedents of leader empowering decision. Therefore, to further our understanding of leadership effectiveness, we need to understand what motivates leaders to behave in certain ways. In two studies, we show how the leader's trust in followers' ability and integrity influences the leader's empowering decision, and how this effect is moderated by leader conscientiousness. Study 1 showed that leader's empowering decisions depends not only on the trust leaders have in their follower's performance and integrity but also on the conscientiousness level of the leader. Study 2 replicated and extended these findings within a different experimental paradigm. Specifically, results showed that the more highly conscientious leaders empower their follower stronger the more they trust their integrity and performance. In contrast, less conscientious leaders make a less careful decision by basing their decisions solely on their trust in their follower's integrity.*

Effective leadership plays a key role in the success of organizations (Druskat & Wheeler, 2003) and has, therefore, been the subject of extensive research. Leadership effectiveness has been traditionally defined as the ability and capacity to influence others (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002). Therefore, researchers in the field of leadership have tried to understand the processes underlying leadership effectiveness by focusing on leader traits or behaviours that influence effective leadership (Fiedler, 1964; Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002), and examining primarily follower's responses to leaders' behaviour. However, to further our understanding of leadership effectiveness, we also need to understand what motivates *leaders* to behave in certain ways.

Over the years, the emphasis in leadership has shifted from an emphasis on leadership as control to leadership as a source of motivation and employee development (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002). This has made employee empowerment an important criterion for leadership effectiveness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). Accordingly, an important question to answer in developing our understanding of effective leadership is what motivates leaders to empower their followers. We make a first step in answering this question, showing how the leader's trust in followers' ability and integrity influences the leader's empowering decision, and how this effect is moderated by leader conscientiousness.

### ***Empowerment and Leader Empowering Behaviour***

In order to adapt to today's competitive market, old patriarchal management needed to change, and competition in the industry has required a variety of initiatives to motivate employees and improve productivity, develop cost-cutting strategies and improve attention to customers needs (Gamble, Culpepper & Blubaugh, 2002). A key initiative in this transformation has been the empowerment of employees (Forrester, 2000). Empowered employees are given greater authority and

responsibility for their work than employees from more traditional organizations (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). This has proven to be very efficient when adequately used (Carson & King, 2005; Conger, 1989; Forrester, 2000), as it is seen to unleash employees' potential, enhance their motivation, allow them to be more adaptive and receptive to their environment, and minimize bureaucratic hurdles that slow responsiveness (Forrester, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996). Although empowerment and the effects of leader empowering behaviour have been widely studied, the determinants of leader empowering behaviour have not yet been addressed in the leadership literature. If, in theory, leaders love the concept of empowerment, practice has shown that leaders fail to implement it (Argyris, 1998). Part of the problem lies in the hands of the leaders (Forrester, 2000; Argyris, 1998). A better understanding of the motivation behind leader empowering behaviour would help us understand why leaders often fail to empower their followers.

Several researchers have developed and advanced the concept of empowerment (e.g., Conger, 1989; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). From this, two main concepts of empowerment have emerged. The first approach defines empowerment in the organizational context. This relational approach to empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) aims at reducing the dependencies that make it difficult to get the job done by delegating power from the leader to the follower (Burke, 1986; Lawler, 1992; Leach, Wall, & Jackson, 2003). This approach focuses on the behaviour of the leader. The second approach understands empowerment as a four-dimensional psychological state based on followers' perceptions of (a) meaningfulness, (b) competence, (c) self-determination, and (d) impact (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The latter approach focuses on the consequence of leaders' behaviour for their followers. From this perspective, empowerment is seen as an experiential construct: empowerment is an enabling process rather than a delegating process. Following Leach et al.



(2003), we argue that the second approach represents a consequence of empowering leader behaviour (or other situational determinants of follower's empowerment). In light of our current research question (i.e., what engenders leader empowering behaviour) the former conception of empowerment is thus more proximal to our research question than the latter. Therefore, we define leader empowering behaviour as leader behaviours involving the delegation of authority and responsibilities to followers. This approach is consistent with earlier studies on leader empowering behaviour that have also identified delegation of authority as a crucial aspect of leader empowering behaviour (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000). Indeed, delegation of authority is one of the six dimensions of leader empowering behaviour described by Konczak et al. (2000). However, more than delegation of authority is involved. As we just said, empowering followers also involves delegating responsibilities. It therefore is also necessary for leaders to share information and knowledge with their followers so that they can contribute to the organization and enabling them to make decisions that are of influence for the organization. The five other dimensions described by Konczak et al. (2000) (accountability, self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development and coaching for innovative performance) are expressing perfectly the present issue.

### ***Trust in integrity and trust in performance***

It is important to note the element of risk present in empowerment. Once empowered, employees can make decisions that can have a significant impact on leaders' ability to achieve their goals. By delegating responsibilities, leaders give up control and become more dependent on their subordinates. Therefore, it is logical to expect that leaders attempt to draw on inferences of their followers and that such inferences will influence their work behaviour and attitude. Leaders might,

then, feel more comfortable to make an empowering decision, if they experience their subordinates as being trustworthy.

Trust in leadership has been widely researched, and the majority of the literature on trust has focused on the subordinate's trust in the leader (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Several models of subordinate's trust in leadership have been developed (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard & Werner, 1998; Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Tan, 1999) but they do not address the leader's trust in the follower. Brower, Schoorman and Tan (2000) do address the leader's trust in the subordinate in their model of relational leadership, however, they did not test their model empirically. Also, the Leader Member Exchange literature addresses the trust relationship between the leader and the subordinate, however, those studies never described how the process worked nor the relative importance of the different factors involved (Northouse, 1997; Yukl, 2002).

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) define trust as 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor'. Studies of trust have identified several attributes or behaviours that are associated with trust in the follower. Two components are consistent among these studies: integrity and performance (Mayer et al., 1995). Butler and Cantrell (1984) found that these two attributes are the most important in deciding whether to trust a subordinate. Also, Brower et al. (2000), basing themselves on a review of two relational theories of leadership and trust, proposed in a model of relational leadership that leaders' perception of their followers trustworthiness will be positively related to risk-taking behaviour such as delegation by the leader. In line with this reasoning, it is logical to expect that leaders' trust in follower's performance and leaders' trust in follower's integrity will interact together to predict are two determinants of leader empowering behaviour. We expect also that these two determinants will interact with each other to predict leader empowering behaviour.

When delegating tasks associated with great responsibilities to their followers, leaders take risks. In fact, most managers recognize that their job security and career progression depend on achieving what organizations demand of them. Partly for this reason, they tend to see their security as being more at risk if they depend on others (Forrester, 2000). Therefore, leaders must take their empowering decision upon a solid base. In a work relationship, the value of employees is partly determined by their ability to produce what is good for and wanted by the organization. Gabarro (1978) found that previous outcomes affect the perceiver's assessment of the person's performance. Thus, we can conclude that good performance has a positive impact on the nature of the relationship between the leader and the subordinate. As a result, we predict that leader's trust in the follower's performance is an antecedent of leader empowering behaviour.

Following the same line of reasoning, when delegating tasks associated with great responsibilities, leaders need to trust that their follower is a fair and consistent person. In other words, leaders need to trust their follower's integrity. The relationship between integrity and trust involves the leader's perception that the subordinate adheres to a set of principles that are acceptable for the leader (Brower et al., 2000; Mayer et al., 1995). The issue of acceptability precludes the argument that a party which is committed solely to profit seeking at all cost will be judged as being high in integrity (Mayer et al., 1995; McFall, 1987). This does not only imply that the subordinate adheres to values that the leader finds positive, but this also means that the subordinate acts in a way that is consistent with these values. These values can be, for example, consistency or predictability (Mayer et al., 1995): subordinates who are inconsistent in their statements to one another, adapting their story or opinion to fit the audience or situation, will not be trusted by their leader. Also, it goes without saying that the end does not always justify the means. Indeed, if, in order to achieve good results, subordinates sabotage the work of others, they will not be trusted by their supervisor. Therefore,

when delegating tasks, the leader will make inferences about the extent to which the subordinates will take advantage of their new powerful position. It is likely that these inferences will affect the willingness of leaders to empower their subordinates.

It is logical to expect that leaders must trust both the performance and the integrity of their follower to empower the follower. Indeed, if leaders take the decision to empower followers that can perform well but whose integrity is low, they take the risk that the followers will not deliver high quality work. Empowering such followers would not be a good choice for a leader. Likewise, if leaders take the decision to empower followers that have the integrity to provide good quality work but do not have the capabilities to do so, they take the risk that the followers will not deliver good quality work. Leaders who would take an empowering decision based either on their trust in their follower's integrity or in their follower's performance alone would not be making a safe and adequate decision as it would not help reducing the risk taken by the empowering decision.

### ***Conscientiousness of the leader***

Because of the potential risk involved in empowering followers that renders leader empowering behaviour contingent to the leader's trust in the follower's performance and integrity, the decision to delegate responsibilities to followers has to be taken carefully. Indeed, to reduce risks to the minimum, leaders must make a well-informed decision. This implies that leaders must think carefully before acting. However, leaders may differ in the extent to which they carefully take account of their follower's performance and integrity in delegating responsibilities. They may be less thorough in making their empowering decision. In other words, some leaders might make a less conscientious decision than others when delegating responsibilities to their follower. Therefore, we propose that leaders may differ in the extent to which they carefully take account of their trust in their followers, and that leaders who are more

conscientious will be more aware and committed to their responsibilities in making the decision to empower their followers.

Conscientiousness has been identified as one of the five basic factors of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991) and is a dimension that contrasts scrupulous, well-organized, and diligent people with lax, disorganized, and lackadaisical individuals. Several studies have investigated the relationship between this dimension of the big five and satisfaction and performance at work. Research has shown that conscientiousness is a good predictor of the way people will act in a work situation (Barrick & Mount, 1991), and suggests that conscientiousness is related to leadership effectiveness (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Research suggests that teams with higher overall mean levels of conscientiousness perform better because their members are less likely to postpone work activities and are more serious when the situation demands it (Barrick & Mount, 1991). People scoring high on conscientiousness are taking more careful decision because they are more driven to do their work accurately. Indeed, conscientiousness is a good indicator of how responsible people will feel to do their work properly. In a meta-analysis, Judge et al. (2002) found conscientiousness to be strongly correlated to leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness. People scoring high in conscientiousness are more careful with their decision-making, more goal-oriented and organized and, therefore, tend to perform better. On the other hand, people scoring low in conscientiousness are careless, irresponsible and tend to take impulsive decisions (Goldberg, 1990; Mount & Barrick, 1995). Following this reasoning, it is logical to expect that leaders' level of conscientiousness moderates the extent to which they will base their empowering decision on their trust in their follower's integrity and performance. More specifically, we expect that leaders scoring high in conscientiousness will take more account of their trust in their follower's performance and integrity before making their empowerment decisions than leaders scoring low in conscientiousness.

*Hypothesis: Leaders' conscientiousness moderates the effect of leaders' trust in their follower's performance and integrity on leader empowering behaviour such that more conscientious leaders' empowering behaviour is more contingent on the extent to which they trust both follower's performance and integrity.*

### **Current Research**

We tested this hypothesis in two studies. Study 1 was a laboratory experiment. All participants in this study were led to believe to be a leader of a team. Follower's integrity and performance were manipulated. The participants had to perform a project in which they had to divide tasks which differed in the degree of responsibility involved - reflected in the numbers of points each task was worth. Successful performance of some of the tasks represented a greater contribution to the collective performance. In this sense, the amount of delegated points served as a measure of leader empowering behaviour. The higher the amount of points a follower would be responsible for, the higher was the contribution to collective performance and, therefore, the more the follower would be responsible for the final score of the team upon completion of the task. Study 2, was designed to replicate these findings in a different experimental paradigm: a scenario experiment. The advantage of using a scenario setting is that it has more mundane realism than a laboratory study. Also, it enabled us to use a more complete measure of empowerment. Indeed, whilst in Study 1 we used one dimension of leader empowering behaviour (delegation of authority), in Study 2 we used the six dimensions of leader empowering behaviour as identified by Konczak et al. (2000). This time participants were asked to imagine a situation where they were a leader in a company and were in six different situations faced with the decision to what extent to empower their follower.

## **Study 1**

Study 1 was a laboratory experimental study. Participants were put into the position of the team leader, and faced with the decision to what extent to empower a follower by delegating authority. To test our hypotheses, we manipulated the leader's trust in the follower's performance and in the follower's integrity. In order to manipulate leader's trust in follower's integrity, we told the participants that their follower scores were high versus low on an integrity measure. To manipulate trust in follower's performance, we told the participants that their follower was 'performing well' versus 'not performing well' on a creativity task. Leader empowering behaviour was operationalized as the delegation of responsibilities as reflected in the importance for the overall team performance of the subtasks delegated to the followers.

## **Method**

### ***Participants and Design***

This study used a between-subjects design manipulating leader's trust in follower's integrity (high vs. low), leaders' trust in follower's performance (high vs. low) and adding a measure of conscientiousness as a continuous variable in the design.

We recruited 174 business and economics student (age:  $M = 19.27$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ; sixty-four percent of the participants were male) to participate in the study in return of 10 euro (approximately \$13). The data of 14 participants were incomplete and could not be analyzed. The analyses were conducted on a sample of 160 participants. The participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. Information about the integrity and performance of the subordinate were given to the leader as feedback. We calculated the mean score for each participant on the

conscientiousness dimension and added this variable as a continuous variable to the design.

### ***Procedure***

The participants were placed in separate cubicles with a personal computer, which was used to present all experimental materials. The participants were told that they were going to work on a short project with another participant and that one of them would be assigned the position of the leader. The participants were asked to fill in a 60 items questionnaire, with 10 conscientiousness items embedded in it. Following this, they were told that, based on their answer on the questionnaire, they were to play the leader's role. All participants were, in fact, assigned to the role of the leader and the subordinates were fictive.

The participants were told that as part of their leader role, they would have to communicate the instructions about the project to their subordinate. The project consisted of four short parts for which they could get a different amount of points. Each part made a unique contribution to the collective performance and the more points the part was worth, the higher the level of responsibility. The number of points that leaders delegated to their subordinates served as measure of empowering leadership behaviour. The participants were instructed to divide the tasks between themselves and the subordinate so that each of them would do at least one part of the project. In addition, they were told that their follower would be doing a short creativity task and fill in a short questionnaire, during the time that the leaders would get the instructions for the project. Just before the leaders were asked to give their instructions to their follower, they were given the follower's results on the two tasks.

The creativity task consisted of a word generation task and gave the leader information about the performance of the subordinate. Because the task that the leader and the follower had to do together was a



creative task, the choice was made to tell the participants that their follower just completed a creativity task, so that participants would have relevant information about the performance of their follower. The result was given using two values: a value representing the average score on this task and the score of the follower. In the high performance condition, the score of the follower was higher than the average value; in the low performance condition was the score of the follower lower than the average value. The questionnaire was meant to give the leader information about the integrity of the subordinate. The result was given using two values: a value representing the average score on the questionnaire and the score of the follower. In the high integrity condition, the score of the follower was higher than the average value; in the low integrity condition was the score of the follower lower than the average value. To give the participants extra motivation to complete the task, they were told that the three groups with the best scores would win € 70 (approximately \$90): € 50 (approximately \$65) for themselves and € 20 (approximately \$25) for their subordinate. In reality, three times € 50 were drawn among the participants. After the participants had divided the tasks, manipulation checks were assessed. Subsequently, they were told that they did not need to actually execute the project and the participants were paid, debriefed, and thanked for their participation.

### **Measures**

After the leaders' trust in follower's performance and integrity manipulations and the main dependent measures, manipulation checks were assessed. The participants were asked to answer a single-item scale measuring trust in performance (*i.e.*, *I trust that my subordinate will perform well*) and a single-item scale measuring trust in integrity (*i.e.*, *I trust that my subordinate is a person of integrity*). The answers were registered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7

(completely agree). The scores of both scales were used in the further analyses.

The main dependent measures followed the leaders' trust in follower's performance and integrity manipulation. The participants were asked to divide the tasks between themselves and their subordinate. The number of points that was given to their subordinates served as measure of leader empowering behaviour. The four tasks were worth respectively, 40, 30, 20 and 10 points so that one could be responsible for 10 to 90 of the total points.

Conscientiousness of the leader was measured with a 10 item scale (Goldberg, Johnson, Eber, Hogan, Ashton, Cloninger, & Gough, 2006). We calculated the mean score for each participant on the conscientiousness dimension and added this variable as a continuous variable in the design.

## **Results**

### ***Manipulation Checks***

Separate hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with leader's trust in follower's integrity, leader's trust in follower's performance, and leader's conscientiousness as independent variables. We entered the main effects and their cross-product into the regression equation. The analysis on the leaders' trust in follower's integrity measure yielded only a significant effect of leaders' trust in follower's integrity,  $\beta = .89, p < .05$ . As intended, leaders trusted their subordinate's integrity more in the high integrity condition ( $M = 5.14, SD = .69$ ) than in low integrity condition ( $M = 2.47, SD = .63$ ). The analysis on the leaders' trust in follower's performance measure yielded only a significant effect of leaders' trust in follower's performance,  $\beta = .88, p < .05$ . Leaders trusted their subordinate's integrity more in the high performance condition ( $M = 5.12, SD = .74$ ) than in low performance condition ( $M = 2.28, SD = .78$ ).

Therefore, the manipulation of leaders' trust in follower's integrity and performance was considered successful.

### ***Leader empowering behaviour***

A hierarchical regression was performed with amount of delegated points as the dependent variable and leaders' trust in follower's integrity, leaders' trust in follower's performance and leader's conscientiousness as independent variables. As expected, the three-way interaction between leaders' trust in follower's integrity, leaders' trust in follower's performance and leader's conscientiousness was significant<sup>1</sup>. The analysis also showed an interaction effect between leaders' trust in follower's integrity and conscientiousness and a main effect of leaders' trust in follower's integrity (see Table 1).

Our hypothesis implied a trust in follower's integrity by trust in follower's performance interaction when leader's conscientiousness was high but not when leader's conscientiousness was low. We therefore tested simple interactions for high and low level of leader's conscientiousness. For this, we computed scores for leader's conscientiousness by adding or distracting one standard deviation following the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991). As expected an interaction effect between leaders' trust in follower's integrity and leaders' trust in follower's performance was only present when the leader's conscientiousness was high,  $\beta = .39, p < .05$ . However, there was no interaction effect between trust in follower's integrity and in follower's performance when leader's conscientiousness was low,  $\beta = -.22, p = .25$  (see Figure 1). However, regression showed a significant simple main effect of trust in follower's integrity when leader's conscientiousness was low. Leaders delegated more points to their followers in the high integrity condition ( $M = 58.15, SD = 15.69$ ) than in the low integrity condition ( $M = 43.61, SD = 19.44$ ).

We conducted simple slopes analyses within the high leader conscientiousness condition. When performance was high, integrity had a positive effect on leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .05$ . When trust in follower's performance was low, however, trust in follower's integrity had no effect on leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = -.07$ ,  $p = .67$ . Leaders delegated more points to their followers when they trusted their follower's integrity and performance more (see Figure 1).

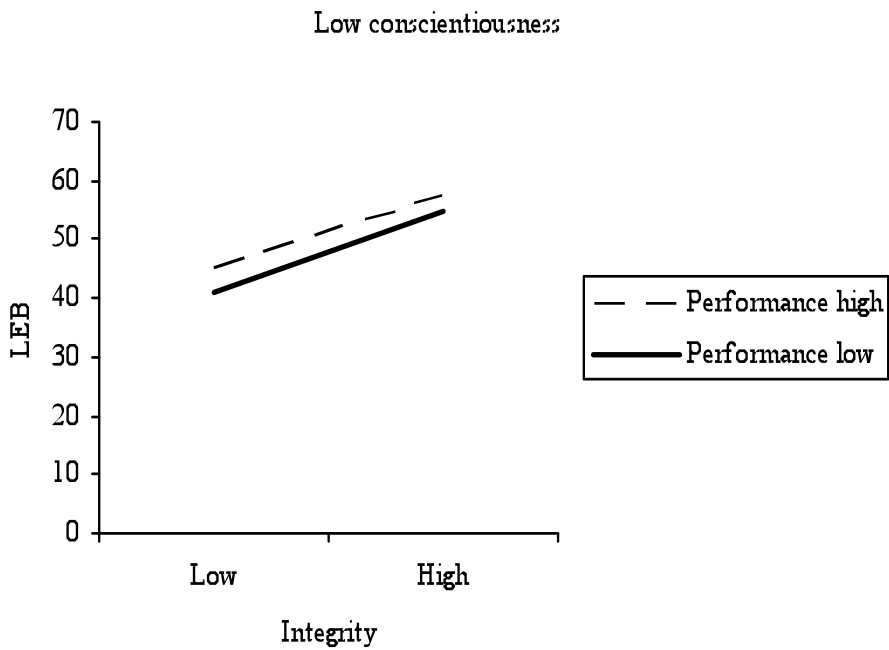
Leader empowering behaviour: the leader's perspective

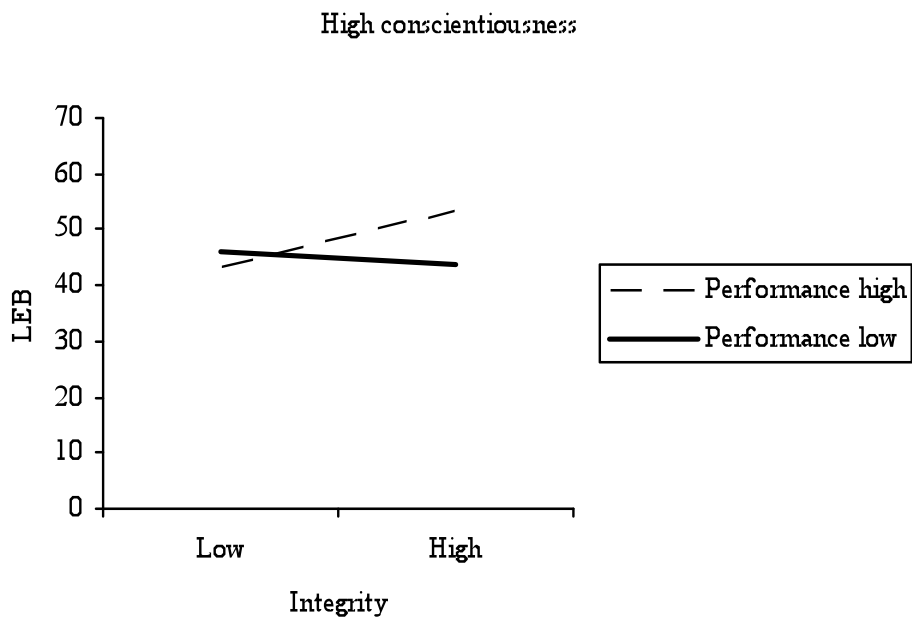
**Table 1** *Regression Analysis on follower's integrity, follower's performance and conscientiousness or leader empowering behaviour, Study 1.*

	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>β</i>
Integrity	7.75	2.92	.21*	2.88	7.55	2.88	.20*	2.87	.22*
Performance	2.79	3.00	.07	2.98	3.64	2.98	.10	2.95	.09
Conscientiousness	-6.79	5.36	-.10	5.5	-4.2	5.5	-.06	5.48	-.08
Integrity x Performance				6.18	5.80	5.80	.08	5.74	.07
Integrity x conscientiousness				-13.32	5.54	5.54	-.19*	-16.72	-.24*
Performance x Conscientiousness				-.53	5.66	5.66	-.01	5.61	.01
Integrity x performance x conscientiousness							24.42	11.28	.17*

*Note.* *N* = 160 *R*<sup>2</sup> = .06 for Step 1 (*p* < .05); *R*<sup>2</sup> = .05 for Step 2; *R*<sup>2</sup> = .07 for Step 3 (*p* < .05). Effects marked with an asterisk are significant at *p* < .05

**Figure 1**  
*Three-way interaction effect of trust in follower’s integrity, trust in follower’s performance, and conscientiousness on amount of points*





### Discussion

The results of Study 1 supported our predictions that leaders' conscientiousness moderates the effect of leaders' trust in their follower's performance and integrity on the leader empowering behaviour. More specifically, results show that trust in the follower's integrity and trust in the follower's performance affect the empowering behaviour of highly conscientious leaders. Highly conscientious leaders were more inclined to delegate points to their followers when their trust in their follower's integrity and performance was high. These leaders took carefully account of their follower's trustworthiness to make their empowerment decision. In contrast, results showed that low conscientious leaders did not make such a careful decision. As seen in Figure 1b, low conscientious leaders gave more responsibilities to their follower in the high integrity condition

than in the low integrity condition. However, they did not take account of the performance level of the follower to make their decision. When making their decision, low conscientious leaders thus make a less careful decision than high conscientious leaders. Less careful leaders were inclined to delegate more authority to followers whose integrity they trusted more regardless of the performance level of the followers. It is possible that less careful leaders assumed that follower's integrity was a sufficient indication of the follower's contribution to the collective task.

## **Study 2**

Study 2 was designed to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1 using a different paradigm. Where in Study 1 we used a laboratory experiment to test whether the effect of the leader's trust in their followers' integrity and performance on leader empowering behaviour would be moderated by the conscientiousness level of the leader, in Study 2 we used a scenario setting. Using a scenario setting enabled us to present the participants with a task with more mundane realism than in the first experiment. Another advantage of using a scenario setting was that we could use a more elaborate measure of leader empowering behaviour. Where in Study 1 we focused on delegation of authority (an important aspect of leader empowering behaviour), in Study 2 we used the six dimensions of leader empowering behaviour as identified by Konczak et al. (2000). The six dimensions are: delegation of authority, accountability, self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development, and coaching for innovative performance.



## Method

### ***Participants and design***

This study used a between-subject design manipulating trust in follower's integrity (high vs. low) and trust in follower's performance (high vs. low). We recruited 159 first and second year business and economics students (age:  $M = 21.71$ ,  $SD = 2.23$ ; seventy percent of the participants were male) to participate in the study in return for 5 euro (approximately \$6.5). The participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Conscientiousness was added to the design as a continuous variable. Conscientiousness of the leader was measured with a 10 item scale (Goldberg, et al., 2006). We calculated the mean score for each participant on the conscientiousness dimension and added this variable as a continuous variable in the design.

### ***Procedure***

The participants were placed in separate cubicles with a personal computer, which was used to present all experimental materials. The participants were presented a scenario in which they were asked to imagine they were a project director of a company. To ensure that all participants would have the same representation of the function, an accurate job description was given to the participants, explaining what was inherent to the function of project director. Additionally, the participants were given a description of the subordinate with whom they had to work on the task.

To manipulate the participants' trust in their follower's integrity, the participants were given the description of a person with high versus low integrity: *[The follower] is known as a fair and consistent person whose motto is: I do what I say and I say what I do* versus *[The follower] is not known as a fair and consistent person whose motto is: I do what I say and I*

*say what I do.*

To manipulate the participants' trust in their follower's performance, the participants were told that the subordinate was performing above versus below average: *The results of [the follower's] yearly evaluation are good and showed that [the follower's] performance was above average* versus *The results of [the follower's] yearly evaluation are not good and showed that [the follower's] performance was below average*. To make sure that the participants understood the description of the subordinates correctly, participants were asked to write in their own words a description of their subordinates.

In a pilot we tested the manipulation of integrity and performance. We gave the manipulation of integrity and performance to a sample of 130 business and economics students. The manipulation checks consisted of two scales: a five-item scale measuring leaders' trust in follower's performance (e.g., I trust my subordinate will perform well) and a four-item scale measuring leaders' trust in follower's integrity (e.g., I trust that my subordinate is a person of integrity). We used 7-point scales ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). Result for these measures showed that the manipulations had the intended effect<sup>2</sup>.

As project director, they were given six different situations depicting six different empowering behaviours and were asked to answer two statements representing two types of leadership behaviour.

## **Measures**

The dependent measure followed the performance and integrity manipulation. The participants were given six situations<sup>3</sup> representing the six dimensions of the leader empowering behaviour questionnaire (Konczak et al., 2000): Delegation of authority, accountability, self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development and coaching for innovative performance and asked to react to two statements about each situation. One of this statement represented empowering leadership, the

other represented directive leadership. Each statement represented a possible behaviour that leaders could show when put in the described situation. We used 7-point scales ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). The scores on directive leadership statements were reversed. A mean score of the scores on both statements served as a measure of leader empowering behaviour.

## Results

### *Leader empowering behaviour*

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed with empowering leadership behaviour as the dependent variable and leaders' trust in follower's integrity, leaders' trust in follower's performance and leader's conscientiousness as independent variables. We enter the main effects and their cross-products into the regression. As expected, regression analysis showed a three-way interaction,  $\beta = .23, p < .02$ .

Because we predicted a trust in follower's integrity by trust in follower's performance interaction when leader's conscientiousness was high but not when leader's conscientiousness was low, we tested simple interactions for high and low levels of leader's conscientiousness. For this, we computed scores for leader's conscientiousness by adding or subtracting one standard deviation following the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991). As expected an interaction effect between leaders' trust in follower's integrity and leaders' trust in follower's performance was only present when the leader's conscientiousness was high,  $\beta = .30, p < .02$ . There was no interaction effect between trust in follower's integrity and in follower's performance when leader's conscientiousness was low,  $\beta = -.11, p = .34$  (see Figure 2). However, regression hinted at a simple main effect of trust in follower's integrity when leader's conscientiousness was low  $\beta = .22, p = .06$ . Leaders empowered their followers more in the high

integrity condition ( $M = 4.67, SD = .48$ ) than in the low integrity condition ( $M = 4.50, SD = .55$ ).

We conducted simple slopes analyses within the high leader conscientiousness condition. When performance was high, integrity had a positive effect on leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = .27, p = .05$ . When trust in follower's performance was low, however, trust in follower's integrity had no effect on leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = -.34, p = .10$ . Leaders empowered their followers more when they trusted their follower's integrity and performance more (see Figure 2).

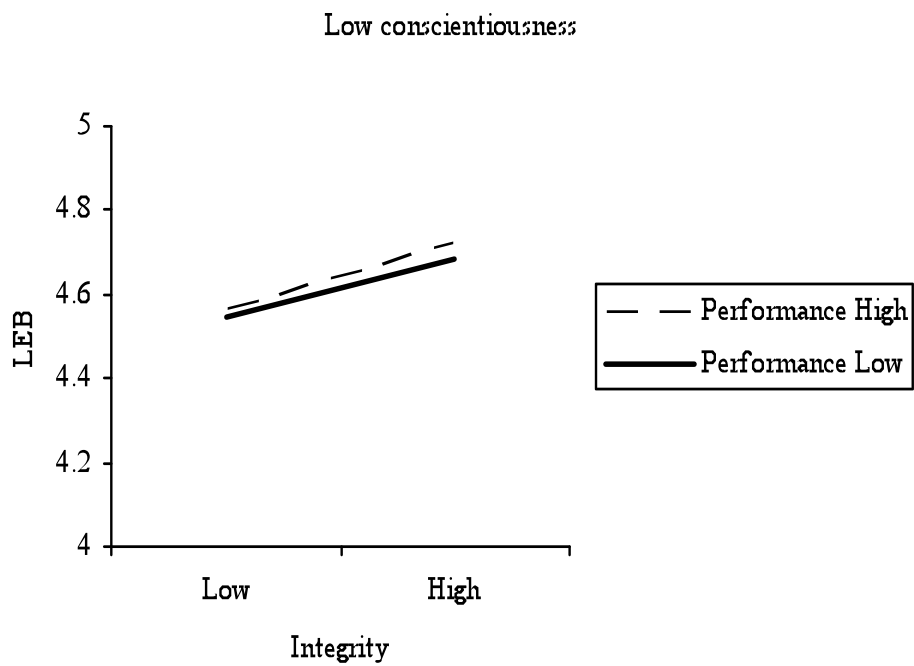
Leader empowering behaviour: the leader's perspective

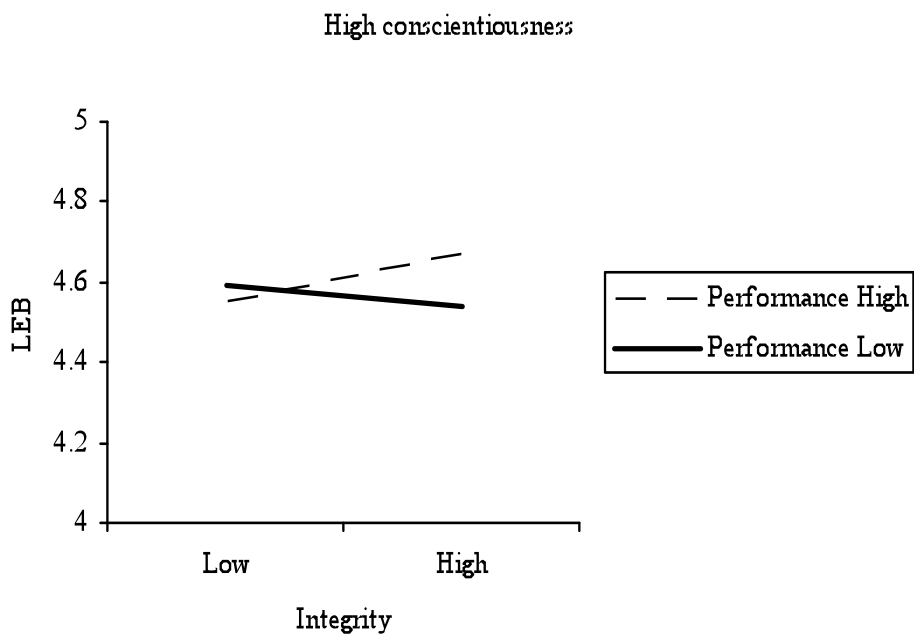
**Table 2**  
*Regression Analysis on follower's integrity, follower's performance and conscientiousness for leader empowering behaviour, Study 2.*

	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	B	SE	B	B	SE	B	B	SE	B
Integrity	.11	.08		.10	.09		.09	.08	.09
Performance	.01	.08		-.01	.086		.01	.08	.01
Conscientiousness	.01	.08		.03	.103		-.02	.10	-.01
Integrity x Performance				.17	.17		.19	.17	.10
Integrity x conscientiousness				-.06	.18		-.30	.21	-.14
Performance x Conscientiousness				-.12	.21		-.12	.21	-.05
Integrity x performance x conscientiousness							1.00	.41	.23*

*Note.* N = 159.  $R^2 = .01$  for Step 1;  $R^2 = .02$  for Step 2;  $R^2 = .06$  for Step 3 ( $p < .02$ ). Effects marked with an asterisk are significant at  $p < .02$

**Figure 2**  
*Three-way interaction effect of trust in follower’s integrity, trust in follower’s performance and conscientiousness on leader empowering behaviour.*





**Discussion**

The results of the present study confirm and extend the results of Study 1. As predicted, the results show that leaders’ trust in follower’s integrity and leaders’ trust in follower’s performance interact with leader’s conscientiousness to influence leader empowering behaviour. High conscientious leaders who trusted their follower’s performance and integrity more empowered their followers more. This replicates and extends the results of Study 1 where we showed that high conscientious leaders delegated more authority. The results of the present study show that high conscientious leaders engage more in empowering behaviours as those identified by Konzczak et al. (2000). Although, the present study did not show a main effect of integrity when conscientiousness was low (as was observed in Study 1), there was a trend towards the same effect.

## **General Discussion**

Follower empowerment has proven to be a very efficient tool if used appropriately (Forrester, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996). However, the implementation of empowerment programs seems to be still problematic. Indeed, it is up to the leaders to find the right way to empower their followers without losing control over their followers' actions. As a result, leaders often fail to act as empowering leaders. However, as leader empowering behaviour is an important factor determining the success of empowerment programs (Forrester, 2000) it is of crucial importance to gain a good understanding of the process of empowerment. We demonstrate that leader empowering behaviour is determined not only by the trust leaders have in their follower's integrity and performance but also by the leader's conscientiousness level. Study 1 focused on an important dimension of leader empowering behaviour (delegation of authority) showing that more conscientious leaders trust their follower's performance and their followers' integrity the more they delegate authority to their followers. However, leader empowering behaviour is not only characterized by the delegation of authority. Study 2 showed therefore that not only high conscientious leaders delegate more authority to followers whose integrity and performance they trust more, they also engaged more in other empowering behaviours as identified by Konczak, et al. (2000). Those leaders engaged not only in short-term empowering behaviour but also in long-term empowering behaviour as they engaged more in behaviours that encouraged the individual development of their followers than low conscientious leaders.

### ***Theoretical implications***

The present research has several theoretical implications. First, while empowering leadership behaviours have been identified to be of great importance in the success of empowerment programs (Forrester,



2000) no studies to our knowledge have considered the antecedents of empowering leadership behaviour. By focusing on the determinants of leader empowering behaviour this research sets a first step in reaching a better understanding of the phenomenon of empowerment from the leader's perspective and, thus, extends research on empowerment. Empowering leadership has mainly been studied with respect to the effect leaders have on their followers. The present study demonstrates that we should also understand the process of leadership as an interaction between the leader and the follower. Secondly, if research has shown a relationship between follower empowerment and trust, the focus was again on the follower. Indeed, several studies reported a significant relationship between (psychological) empowerment and followers trust in their managers (e.g., Ergeneli, Saglam, & Metin, 2007; Moye & Henkin, 2006). The present study, however, looks at trust as an antecedent of leader empowering behaviour instead of a consequence, showing its importance in the empowerment process. Thirdly, this study extends the research on empowerment, by showing the importance of leader's personality characteristics –conscientiousness– in the empowerment process. If leadership and personality dimensions have already been linked in previous research (e.g., Hofmann & Jones, 2005; Judge, et al., 2002), our findings extend this research by showing the importance of leader's conscientiousness in the leader empowering decision process.

### ***Practical implications***

The present research also has practical implications. For instance, making leaders aware of the factors engaged in their decision making process could enable leaders to make a more accurate decision when taking their empowering decision. As the present research has shown, leader empowering decision depends not only on their perception of their followers' characteristics but also on their own personality characteristics. Companies can foster employee empowerment by changing the top-down

structure of their organizations and shift to a more open structure. Nevertheless, this alone is not enough to ensure the successful implementation of the empowerment programs. Selecting leaders on their conscientiousness level would therefore be beneficial for the company as those leaders will make more careful empowering decisions. If leaders love empowerment in theory, experience has shown that, in practice, leaders fail to behave as empowering leaders (Argyris, 1998; Forrester, 2000). It is important for leaders to realize their part of responsibility in the process of empowerment and understand what motivates them to take their decision.

### ***Limitations and future research***

This study has, of course, its weaknesses and its limitations. First, we used two different experimental laboratory designs to test our hypotheses. The advantage of using such methodologies lies in the ability to test for causal relationships but it does not allow us to know in how far these results can be generalized to an organizational context. However, we think that the controlled environment used in this study was necessary as our research question was new. In addition, it is interesting to note that several leadership studies testing their hypotheses in a laboratory as well as in the field have consequently shown that results from laboratory experiments generalize to field settings (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002, 2004; De Cremer, van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Mullenders, & Stinglhamber, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). Even so the present studies have had sufficient experimental realism; it would be worthwhile to replicate their key findings in a study with more mundane realism. Therefore, future research should try to replicate the findings of the present study in a field setting. The set-up of the study would require that data from leaders and followers be coupled. Leaders should be asked to answer questions about their conscientiousness level, their trust in their follower's performance and integrity and their perception of their

empowering behaviour towards the follower. Followers, in turn, should be asked to rate their leaders on the leader empowering behaviour dimensions. In addition, it would be interesting to look at the effects leader empowering behaviours have on followers' commitment and satisfaction with their job.

Future research might look at other factors that could play a moderating role in leader empowering decisions. The results of the present research imply that factors that lead to trust will influence leader empowering behaviour. One factor that could moderate the effect of the leader's trust in the follower's integrity and performance on leader empowering decision is the identification of the leader with the follower. Indeed, research in leadership effectiveness has already shown that identification between leaders and followers is of great importance in determining the effectiveness of the leader. Followers that identify with their leader are more likely to trust their leader than followers that do not (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). Following the reasoning of the present study and based on the present results, it would be logical to expect that the more leaders identify with their followers, the more they will trust them and, therefore, empower them. Therefore, it would be very interesting to understand the effect of identification in the process of empowering leadership. In the same line of reasoning, one could expect that relational demography would also moderate the effect of the leader's trust in the follower's ability and performance on leader empowering decision. Indeed, building on the social identity theory, people from the same gender might identify more with each other as they are belonging to the same group and might be more favourably biased towards their own gender.

The present research has also shown that conscientiousness led to a more careful decision, as high conscientious leaders empowered their followers the most when they trusted their follower's integrity and performance the most. Other factors, beside conscientiousness are likely to lead to a more careful empowering decision. Future research should

thus also look at other moderating factors besides personality factors like conscientiousness. A first step could be to look at situational factors. Because of the element of risk that is present in empowerment, it would be a logical first step to look at accountability. Once empowered, employees can make decisions that can have a significant impact on leaders' ability to achieve their goal. Leaders, however, can be held responsible for their followers' actions as well as for their followers' performances. For that reason, the potential threat of having to explain certain behaviours – therefore to be accountable for it – can make leaders more carefully consider engaging in such behaviours. In the same line of reasoning it would be interesting to look at the effect of workload on the leaders' empowering decision process. Leaders experiencing a high workload might be more incline to empower their follower to reduce their workload and be less careful in their decision. Here again, it would be very interesting to understand better the effect of it in the process of empowering leadership.

### ***To conclude***

In conclusion, leader's empowering decisions depends not only on the trust leaders have in their follower's performance and integrity but also on the characteristics of the leader. Because leaders are making the empowering decisions, it is important to understand what kind of factors influence their decision. This research provides a first step in a yet virtually unexplored research area, the determinants of leader empowering behaviour, showing that leader's trust in their follower's performance and integrity interacts with leader's conscientiousness to predict leader empowering behaviour. Besides showing first insight in the empowering leadership process, our research also suggests a research agenda for the future. Indeed, future research may investigate other factors that could lead to a more careful empowering decision or factors that lead to trust in the follower.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> A hierarchical regression analysis was performed between amount of delegated tasks as the dependent variable and follower's integrity, follower's performance and leader's conscientiousness as independent variables. The three-way interaction between follower's integrity, follower's performance and leader's conscientiousness was not significant,  $\beta = .23$ ,  $p = .20$ . As expected, leaders did not raise the work load by giving more tasks to their followers. They divided the task equally between themselves and their followers.

<sup>2</sup> Separate 2(integrity) x 2(performance) between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted. The analysis on the integrity measure yielded only a significant effect of integrity,  $F(1, 126) = 111.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .47$ . As intended, leaders trusted their subordinate's integrity more in the high integrity condition ( $M = 5.32$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) than in low integrity condition ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). The analysis on the performance measure yielded only a significant effect of performance,  $F(1, 126) = 39.04$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .24$ . Leaders trusted their subordinate's performance more in the high performance condition ( $M = 5.04$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) than in low performance condition ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ). Therefore, the manipulation of leaders' trust in follower's integrity and leaders' trust in follower's performance was successful.

<sup>3</sup> Each situation had previously been pilot tested with 15 managers of a pharmaceutical company and gave a reliable description of real life situations.

## Chapter 3

### **The influence of trust and epistemic motivation on leader empowering behaviour.**

*Leader empowering behavior is an important criterion for leadership effectiveness. In three studies, we tested the influence of leader's epistemic motivation define on leader empowering behavior focusing on two determinants of epistemic motivation: accountability and workload. Study 1 demonstrates that accountability interacts with follower trustworthiness to affect leader empowering behavior such that leaders experiencing high accountability will take more account of follower trustworthiness than leaders experiencing low accountability. Study 2 demonstrates that workload interacts with follower trustworthiness to affect leader empowering behavior such that leaders experiencing high workload are less motivated to take into account their follower's trustworthiness than leaders experiencing low workload. Study 3 replicates the findings of Study 1 and Study 2 in a field setting. We discuss the implication of these findings in terms of the more general role of leader epistemic motivation.*

Leadership has been the topic of extensive research in organizational behaviour and psychology. In the past decades, researchers in the field of leadership have focused on leader traits or behaviours that influence effective leadership (Bass, 1990; Fiedler, 1964; Yukl, 2002). Leadership effectiveness has been traditionally defined as the ability and capacity to influence followers (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002). Therefore, research in leadership has tried to understand the processes underlying leadership effectiveness by examining primarily follower's responses to leaders' behaviour. However, to further our understanding of leadership effectiveness, we also need to understand what motivates *leaders* to behave in certain ways.

Increasingly, the emphasis in leadership is on more inspirational aspects of leadership. Leaders are not only seen as a source of control but are expected to be a source of motivation and employee development (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002), making employee empowerment an important criterion for leadership effectiveness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). Indeed, leadership studies have argued that empowerment is at the root of organizational effectiveness (Kanter, 1979; Tannenbaum, 1968). Consequently, an important question to answer in developing our understanding of effective leadership is what motivates leaders to empower their followers. We make a first step in answering this question, arguing for the core role of trust in the follower and showing how the effect of trust in the follower is moderated by the leader's epistemic motivation (accountability and workload) to determine leader empowering behaviour.

### ***Empowerment and Leader Empowering Behaviour***

With the competition in today's market being increasingly fierce, old patriarchal management needed to adapt itself. To enhance organizational competitiveness, a variety of initiatives were required to motivate employees and improve productivity, develop cost-cutting

strategies and improve attention to customers needs (Gamble, Culpepper, & Blubaugh, 2002). A key initiative in this transformation has been the empowerment of employees (Forrester, 2000). Indeed, in order to engage more fully their abilities, empowered employees are given greater authority and responsibility for their work than employees from more traditional organizations (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Yun, Cox, & Sims, 2006). When adequately used, employee empowerment has proven to be very efficient (Carson & King, 2005; Conger, 1989; Forrester, 2000), as it is seen to unleash employees' potential, enhance their motivation, allow them to be more adaptive and receptive to their environment, and minimize bureaucratic hurdles that slow responsiveness (Forrester, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996). If the concept of empowerment and the effects of leader empowering behaviour have been the topic of numerous studies, little or no research has addressed the determinants of leader empowering behaviour. If, in theory, leaders love the concept of empowerment, practice has shown that leaders fail to implement it (Argyris, 1998). Part of the problem lies in the hands of the leaders, as their actions are an important determinant of empowerment (Argyris, 1998; Forrester, 2000; Yukl, 2002). A better understanding of the motivation behind leader empowering behaviour would help us understand better which conditions foster leader empowering behaviour and which conditions do not.

The concept of empowerment has been developed and studied by several researchers (e.g., Conger, 1989; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). From this, two major conceptualizations of empowerment have emerged, defining empowerment either as a relational construct or as a motivational construct (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The first approach defines empowerment in the organizational context and focuses on the behaviour of the leader. This relational approach to empowerment aims at reducing the dependencies that make it difficult to get the job done by delegating power from the leader to the follower (Burke, 1986; Lawler,



1992; Leach, Wall, & Jackson, 2003). The second approach, however, focuses on the consequences of leader's behaviour and defines empowerment as a four-dimensional psychological state based on followers' perceptions of (a) meaningfulness – the feeling that their work is personally important – (b) competence – the confidence in their ability to perform tasks well – (c) self-determination – the freedom to choose how they perform their tasks –and (d) impact – the influence in their work role – (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Leach et al., 2003; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). This approach defines empowerment as an enabling process rather than a delegating process (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Following Leach et al. (2003), we argue that the second approach represents a consequence of empowering leader behaviour (or other situational determinants of follower's empowerment). With regards to our current research question – what engenders leader empowering behaviour? – the former conception of empowerment is thus more proximal to our research question than the latter. Therefore, we define leader empowering behaviour as leader behaviours that involve the sharing of power, including the delegation of decision making and an increased follower access to information resources (Spreitzer, 1995). Indeed, to delegate responsibility, leaders need to share information and knowledge with their followers in order that they can contribute to the organization and enabling them to make decisions that are of influence for the organization. This approach is consistent with the definition of empowerment used by Konczak, Stelly, and Trusty (2000) to develop their measurement of leader empowering behaviour. Konczak et al. (2000) identified six dimensions of leader empowering behaviour: delegation of authority, accountability, self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development, and coaching for innovative performance. The six dimensions described by Konczak et al. (2000) express perfectly the present issue.

***Trust in the follower***

To appropriately understand the phenomenon of empowerment, it is essential to take account of the element of risk present in empowerment. Once leaders empower their followers, they enable them to take decisions that could have considerable consequences for the leaders' ability to meet their targets. When empowering their followers, leaders share sensitive information with their followers, disclose problems, and delegate authority. By doing so, leaders give up control and become more dependent on their subordinates. For this reason, it is logical to expect that leaders need to be able to trust their followers, and that the level of trust leaders have in their followers will influence their work behaviour and attitudes. With other words, if leaders experience their followers as being trustworthy, they might be more willing to engage in empowering behaviours.

Trust in leadership has been widely studied and the majority of the literature on trust has focused on the subordinate's trust in the leader (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Several models of subordinate's trust in leadership have been developed (Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Tan, 1999; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard & Werner, 1998) but they do not address the leader's trust in the follower. Brower, Schoorman and Tan (2000) do address the leader's trust in the subordinate in their model of relational leadership, but did not test their model empirically.

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995, p. 712) define trust as 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor'. Studies of trust have identified several attributes or behaviours that are associated with trust in the follower. Two types of indicators have been consistently identified among these studies: indicators of the competence (ability) of the target and indicators of the values and moral ethics of the target (integrity) (Ammeter, Douglas, Ferris, & Goka, 2004; Mayer et al., 1995). Butler and Cantrell (1984) found that

ability and integrity are the most important attributes in deciding whether to trust a subordinate. Also, Brower et al. (2000), basing themselves on a review of two relational theories of leadership and trust, proposed in a model of relational leadership that leaders' perception of their followers trustworthiness is positively related to empowering behaviour.

When leaders share sensitive information, delegate authority to their followers, or coach them to be innovative, they take decisions with a potential risk. As most managers recognize that their job security and career progression depend on achieving what organizations demand of them, leaders tend to see their security as being more at risk when they depend on others (Forrester, 2000). For this reason, it is of great importance for leaders to assess their followers' trustworthiness as a basis for their empowering decision. This implies that leaders must assess the abilities of their followers to ensure that their follower will produce what is good and wanted by the organization. Gabarro (1978) found that previous outcomes affect the perceiver's assessment of the person's ability. In the same line of reasoning, leaders need to assess whether their follower is a fair and consistent person. In other words, leaders need to assess their follower's integrity. The relationship between integrity and trust involves the leader's perception that the subordinate adheres to a set of principles that are acceptable for the leader (Brower et al., 2000; Mayer et al., 1995). The issue of acceptability precludes the argument that a party who is committed solely to profit seeking at all cost will be judged as being high in integrity (Mayer et al., 1995; McFall, 1987). This does not only imply that the subordinate adheres to values that the leader finds positive, but this also means that the subordinate acts in a way that is consistent with these values. These values can be, for example, consistency or predictability (Mayer et al., 1995): followers who are inconsistent in their statements to one another, adapting their story or opinion to fit the audience or situation, will not be trusted by their leader. Also, it goes without saying that the end does not always justify the means. Indeed, if in order to achieve good results subordinates sabotage

the work of others, they will not be trusted by their supervisor. Therefore, to trust their subordinates, leaders will make inferences about the extent to which the subordinates will take advantage of their new powerful position that would follow from empowerment as well as about the follower's performance.

In sum, following Mayer et al. (1995), we argue that performance and integrity are crucial aspects of trust in workplace settings. Indeed, leaders must consider both these characteristics in their follower when making their trust assessment. Relating this to leader empowering behaviour, if leaders take the decision to empower followers who can perform well but whose integrity is low, they must take into consideration that the followers may not deliver high quality work. Empowering such followers would not be a good choice for a leader. Likewise, if leaders take the decision to empower followers who have the integrity to provide good quality work but do not have the capabilities to do so, they expose themselves to the fact that the followers may not deliver good quality work. Leaders will therefore consider both components of trust. In line with this reasoning, we define trust in the follower as the trust leaders have in their follower's ability and integrity.

### ***The epistemics of leader empowering decisions***

Leaders tend to see their job security and their career prospect to be more uncertain when they are dependent on others (Forrester, 2000). However, empowering decisions might be importantly affected by the motivational context in which the decision is taken. If the decision is taken in a context that stresses the costs of hasty decisions and the benefits of a careful decision, leaders might be motivated to take more carefully into consideration the trustworthiness of their followers than when the decision is taken in a context that reduces the perceived costs of hastily taken decisions and stresses the perceived benefits of a quickly taken decision. Therefore, depending on their *epistemic motivation* – the desire

to develop and maintain an accurate and deep understanding of the world (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996) – leaders may have a lower versus a higher motivation to take careful account of the trustworthiness of their follower.

All epistemic motivations are assumed to derive from the individual's cost-benefit analysis (Kruglanski, 1990). The context is assumed to influence the perception individuals have of those costs and benefits (Kruglanski, 1990). Indeed, the perceived costs of cognitive closure may be related to the basis for action of an individual. Research has shown that individuals that are held accountable for their decisions are more motivated to form an accurate understanding of the decision problem than individuals who are not accountable, who are more likely not to engage in deep thinking and jump to conclusions on the basis of insufficient information (De Dreu, Koole, & Steinel, 2000; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Scholten, van Knippenberg, Nijstad, & De Dreu, 2007; Sedikides, Herbst, Hardin, & Dardis, 2002; Simonson & Staw, 1992). Likewise, the perspective of the additional time and effort necessary to attain closure may influence the perceived costs of lacking closure (Kruglanski, 1990). When individuals are put under time pressure they are less motivated to engage in deep and systematic information processing and are more influenced by heuristic cues (De Dreu, 2003; Kruglanski & Freund, 1983).

We propose that the epistemic motivation of the leader will moderate the influence of leader's trust in their followers on the leader's empowering behaviour. High levels of epistemic motivation will stimulate leaders to take more account of their subordinate's trustworthiness while low levels of epistemic motivation will stimulate leaders to take less account of their subordinate's trustworthiness. In the present study, we put this more general proposition to the test by focusing on the influence of two factors that are known to affect epistemic motivation. In Study 1 we zoom in on the influence of accountability as a factor associated with high levels of epistemic motivation. In Study 2 we study the role of leader workload as a factor associated with lower level of epistemic motivation.

### ***Accountability***

The potential costs of being accountable for the behaviour of their follower might encourage leaders to minimize the potential risks inherent in empowerment by more carefully considering their trust in their follower. Every organization needs to apply some sort of control on the behaviour of its employees in order to ensure a functional and effective process, but organizations and situations may differ nevertheless greatly in the extent to which actors are accountable (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Tetlock, 1985). Leaders can be formally (e.g., performance evaluation system) or informally (e.g., feelings of loyalty towards the company) accountable for their actions and the actions and results of their followers (Ammeter et al. 2004; Hall, Blass, Ferris, & Massengale, 2004). There again, however, organizations differ enormously in the extent to which they apply evaluation systems.

Accountability has been defined in the literature as “the perceived need to justify or defend a decision or action to some audience which has potential reward and sanction power, and where such rewards and sanctions are perceived as contingent on accountability conditions” (Frink & Klimoski, 1998). As a result, if leaders are held accountable for the procedures and/or standards that have been used in the decision making process and the quality of the decision outcome, it is logical to expect them to be more inclined to take into account their trust in their follower. Indeed, if the followers engage in reckless and/or unethical behaviour, or if the followers do not deliver desired results, leaders will be held accountable for their followers’ actions and results. This can have considerable consequences for their work stability and their career prospects. Also, previous research has shown that accountability leads to high motivation to engage in deep and systematic information processing (Scholten et al., 2007). In line with this reasoning, we expect that the more leaders are held accountable for the actions and results of their followers,

the more they will take account of their followers' trustworthiness when making their empowering decisions.

*Hypothesis 1: Accountability moderates the effect of follower trustworthiness on leader empowering behaviour such that the positive effect of follower trustworthiness on leader empowering behaviour is stronger for leaders experiencing high accountability than for leaders experiencing low accountability.*

### **Workload**

When leaders are in situations where time is limited, they might be less motivated to take careful account of their followers' trustworthiness. Indeed, Kruglanski and Webster (1996) identified time pressure as a variable reducing epistemic motivation. If the latent uncertainty involved in follower's empowerment renders leader empowering behaviour contingent to the follower's trustworthiness, leaders can be caught up in situations where empowering followers might also be appealing from the perspective of a leader who would otherwise be faced with the responsibilities him or herself. Indeed, research has shown that under time pressure, individuals are more likely to engage in shallow rather than thorough information processing (De Dreu, 2003). A reason for that is that individuals under high time pressure have a higher need for cognitive closure (De Dreu, 2003). Need for cognitive closure is the desire for a quick, firm answer to a question (Webster & Kruglanski, 1998). Workload, like time pressure, is defined as the reflection of the employees' experience of the demand placed upon them in their job and is broadly defined as the amount of work that employees need to do in a certain amount of time (Ilies, Schwind, Wagner, Johnson, DeRue, & Ilgen, 2007; Spector, Dwyer, & Jex, 1988). Indeed, workload implies that you do not have enough time to complete all the work you need to do in the time that is allocated to you, as a lot of work alone does not imply a high workload if

one has sufficient time to finish it. Similarly, a limited amount of time does not imply a high workload, as a small amount of work in a short space of time does not lead to a high workload. Therefore, workload and time pressure are defining the same concept. In line with the previous findings on time pressure, it is therefore logical to expect workload to have a negative effect on the quality of the decisions taken by leaders. When confronted with a high work demand, where they are asked to perform a lot of work in a – too – short period of time, leaders might be more inclined to delegated responsibilities to their followers, even when they trust them less. Following this reasoning, we expect that the more workload leaders experience, the less careful will they be when taking their empowering decision. In other words, we propose that leaders experiencing more workload will take less account of their follower's trustworthiness when making their empowering decision.

*Hypothesis 2: Workload moderates the effect of follower trustworthiness on leader empowering behaviour such that the positive effect of follower trustworthiness on leader empowering behaviour is stronger for leaders experiencing low workload than for leaders experiencing high workload.*

### **The Current Research**

We tested our hypotheses in three studies. We tested our hypotheses first in laboratory settings. The first study tested Hypothesis 1 while the second study tested Hypothesis 2. The advantage of the experimental nature of the studies is that it enables us to draw conclusions about causality. In a second step, to test the occurrence of the predicted relationships in organizational settings, we also tested our hypotheses in a cross-sectional survey. By doing so, the strength of the one method may compensate for the weaknesses of the other (Dipboye, 1990).



In Study 1 and Study 2 we tested our hypotheses using a scenario experiment. Participants were asked to imagine that they were a leader in a company and were in six different situations faced with the decision to what extent to empower their follower. Each situation was the reflection of one dimension of leader empowering behaviour as identified by Konczak et al. (2000). We pilot-tested the operationalization of these dimensions among managers of a pharmaceutical company. We manipulated accountability of the leader by manipulating the position of the leader in the company (project director versus owner of the company) and leader's trust in the follower by manipulating information about the follower. Replicating the findings of Study 1 and Study 2, Study 3 investigated the interaction between leader's accountability and leader's trust in the follower and the interaction between workload and leader's trust in the follower in the field.

### **Study 1**

#### **Method**

##### ***Participant and design***

This study used a between-subject design manipulating leader's trust in the follower (high vs. low) and accountability of the leader (high vs. low). We recruited 113 first and second year business and economics students of a Dutch university (age:  $M = 20.14$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ; seventy one percent of the participants were male) to participate in the study in return for 1 course credit. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions.

### **Procedure**

The participants were placed in separate cubicles with a personal computer, which was used to present all experimental materials. Before the participants were presented with the scenario, they were asked to describe a situation where they experienced, depending on the condition, high or low accountability. Following this prime, the participants were presented a scenario in which they were asked to imagine they were, depending on the condition, either a project director of a company or the owner of the company. To ensure that all participants would have the same representation of the function, an accurate job description was given to the participants, explaining what was inherent to the function of project director or to the function of owner of a company. Additionally, the participants were given a description of the subordinate with whom they had to work.

To manipulate accountability, the participants were told in the high accountable condition that they were to imagine that they were a project director of an architecture firm, and that their accountability as a leader was high: *As a project manager you have to report to your region manager. You are accountable for the results achieved by your team but also for the good course of actions in your department. This means that you are accountable for the leadership decisions that you take.* In the low accountability condition, participants were told that they were to imagine that they were an owner of an architecture firm, and that their accountability as a leader was low: *As the owner of the firm you don't have to report to anybody. You are not accountable for the results achieved by your team or for the good course of actions in your company. This means that you are not accountable for the leadership decisions that you take.* Also, to strengthen the accountability manipulation, participants in the high accountability condition were told that they would be asked to explain their decision to a research assistant at the end of the experiment. Participants in the low accountability condition were told nothing. To

manipulate the participants' trust in their follower, the participants were given the description of a person with high versus low integrity that performed high versus low: *The results of [the follower's] yearly evaluation are good and showed that [the follower's] performance was above average. Moreover, [the follower] is known as a fair and consistent person whose motto is: I do what I say and I say what I do* versus *The results of [the follower's] yearly evaluation are not good and showed that [the follower's] performance was below average. Moreover, [the follower] is not known as a fair and consistent person whose motto is: I do what I say and I say what I do*. To make sure that the participants understood the description of the subordinates correctly, participants were asked to write in their own words a description of their subordinates.

As project director, they were given six different situations depicting six different empowering behaviours representing the six dimensions of the leader empowering behaviour questionnaire (Konczak et al., 2000): Delegation of authority, accountability, self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development and coaching for innovative performance. We pilot-tested these dimensions among managers of a pharmaceutical company. In each situation, participants were asked to answer two statements representing two types of leadership behaviour: empowering leadership behaviour and directive leadership behaviour. Each statement represented a possible behaviour that leaders could show when put in the described situation.

### **Measures**

We used 7-point scales ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree) for all measures.

Manipulation checks were assessed after each manipulation. To check the accountability manipulation, participants were asked to answer a four-item scale measuring leader's accountability (e.g., "I am accountable for the good course of events"). To check the trust

manipulation, participants were asked to answer an eight-item scale measuring leader's trust in followers' performance and integrity (e.g., "I trust that my follower behaves in a fair way when dealing with others").

The dependent measure followed the workload and trust manipulation. The participants were given six situations and asked to answer two statements about each situation. One of this statements represented empowering leadership, the other represented directive leadership. The scores on directive leadership statements were reversed. A mean score of the scores on both statements served as a measure of leader empowering behaviour. An example of it is: *Your subordinate works currently on a project which is in an early stage. Your subordinate is meeting some problems like with every project which is still in an early stage. This is totally normal. However, you know how to solve the problems. You will get now two statements related to this situation. Please indicate for every statement to what extent you agree with it:*

*"I encourage my subordinate to use systematic problem solving methods to solve the problems." "I tell my subordinate how the problems should be solved."*

## Results

### **Manipulation checks**

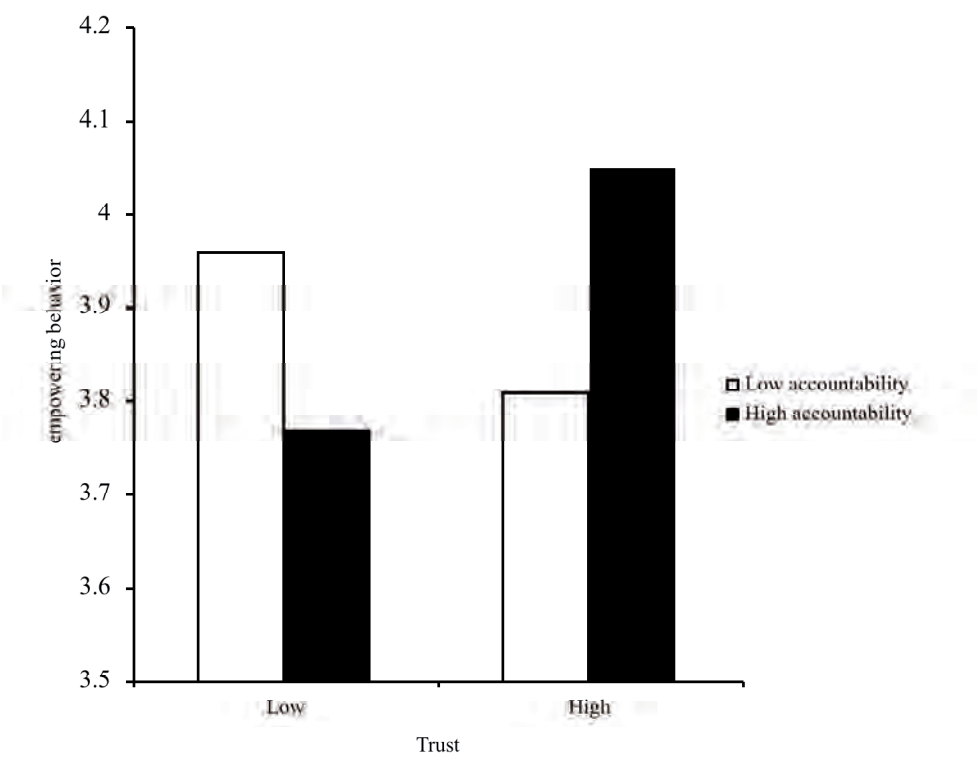
Separate analyses of variance with leader's trust in the follower and accountability as independent variables were conducted to analyze the manipulation checks. The analysis on the leaders' trust in the follower yielded only a significant effect of the trust manipulation,  $F(1, 109) = 326.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .75$ . As intended, leaders trusted their subordinate more in the high trust condition ( $M = 5.28$ ,  $SD = .60$ ) than in low trust condition ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = .79$ ). The analysis on the leaders' accountability measure yielded only a significant effect of leaders' accountability,  $F(1, 109) = 102.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .48$ . Leaders experienced more accountability in the high accountability condition ( $M = 5.75$ ,  $SD = .89$ ) than in low

accountability condition ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ). Therefore, the manipulation of leaders' trust in the follower and leaders' accountability was considered successful.

### ***Leader empowering behaviour***

An analysis of variance on leader empowering behaviour showed the expected interaction effect between leader's trust in the follower and leader's accountability  $F(1, 109) = 8.75$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ . Tests of simple main effects indicated that when leader's accountability was low, trust in the follower had no influence on leader empowering behaviour  $F(1, 109) = 3.47$ ,  $p = .07$ . When leader's accountability was high, however, trust had a positive effect on leader empowering behaviour  $F(1, 109) = 5.38$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$  (see Figure 1). The results supported Hypotheses 1

**Figure 1**  
*Two-way interaction effect of follower’s trustworthiness and accountability on leader empowering behaviour*



**Discussion**

The results of Study 1 supported our prediction that a high level of epistemic motivation of the leader would lead to a stronger effect of trust on the empowering decision of the leader. Leaders took more account of their trust in their followers the more accountable they were for the actions and results of their followers. When leader’s accountability was low, leaders did not take account of their trust in the follower to base their empowering behaviour. When the leader’s accountability was high, on the contrary, leader’s trust in their follower had a positive effect on leader empowering behaviour. The potential costs of having to be accountable

for the actions and results of the follower motivate leader to be more careful when taking their empowering decision.

## Study 2

### Method

#### ***Participants and design***

This study used a between-subject design manipulating leader's trust in the follower (high vs. low) and workload of the leader (high vs. low). We recruited 116 first and second year business and economics students of a Dutch university (age:  $M = 19.81$ ,  $SD = 2.54$ ; 59 % of the participants were male) to participate in the study in return for 1 course credit. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions.

#### ***Procedure***

The procedure was similar to the one of Study 1. To manipulate workload, the participants were told that as a project-director, their workload was high versus low: *The workload is high and you often have the feeling that you don't have enough time to finish your work. You have to work fast and it happens often that you have to work extra hard to finish something on time* versus *The workload is low and you rarely have the feeling that you don't have enough time to finish your work. You don't have to work fast and it happens rarely that you have to work extra hard to finish something on time*. To strengthen the workload manipulation, we asked the participants to describe a situation where they experienced, depending on the condition, a high versus a low workload. They were asked to give this description before they were presented with the scenario.

## ***Measures***

We used 7-point scales ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree) for all measures.

Manipulation checks were assessed after each manipulation. To check the workload manipulation, participants were asked to answer a four-item scale measuring leader's workload (e.g. As project-director I usually have enough time to finish my work). To check the trust manipulation, participants were asked to answer a eight-item scale measuring leader's trust in followers' performance and integrity (e.g. I trust that my follower behaves in a fair way when dealing with others). The scale was identical to the one used in Study 1.

The dependent measure followed the workload and trust manipulation. We used the same manipulation of trust and the same dependent measure as in Study 1.

## **Results**

### ***Manipulation checks***

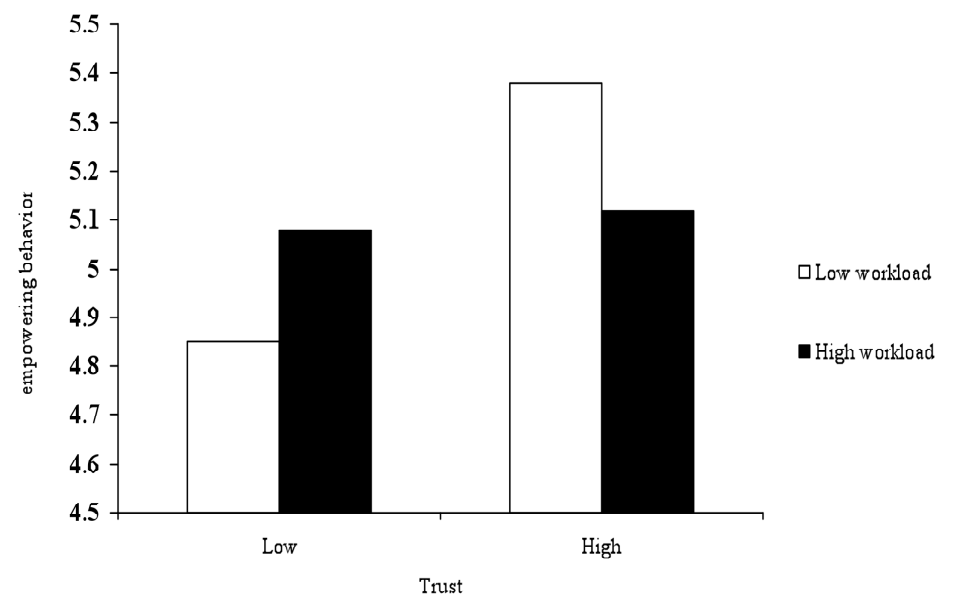
Separate analyses of variance with leader's trust in the follower and workload as independent variables were conducted to analyze the manipulation checks. The analysis on the leaders' trust in the follower yielded only a significant effect trust manipulation,  $F(1, 112) = 286.24, p < .001, \eta^2 = .72$ . As intended, leaders trusted their subordinate more in the high trust condition ( $M = 5.36, SD = .55$ ) than in low trust condition ( $M = 3.07, SD = .86$ ). The analysis on the leaders' workload measure yielded only a significant effect of leaders' workload,  $F(1, 112) = 205.49, p < .001, \eta^2 = .65$ . Leaders experienced more workload in the high workload condition ( $M = 5.13, SD = .48$ ) than in low workload condition ( $M = 3.46, SD = .73$ ). Therefore, the manipulation of leaders' trust in the follower and leaders' workload was considered successful.



**Leader empowering behaviour**

An analysis of variance on leader empowering behaviour showed the expected interaction effect between leader’s trust in the follower and leader’s workload  $F(1, 112) = 4.57, p = .035, \eta^2 = .04$ . The results also showed a main effect of trust  $F(1, 112) = 6.12, p = .015$ . Tests of simple main effects indicated that when workload was high, trust in the follower had no influence on leader empowering behaviour  $F(1, 112) = 0.06, p = .81$ . When the workload was low, however, trust had a positive effect on leader empowering behaviour  $F(1, 112) = 10.45, p = .002, \eta^2 = .09$  (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
*Two-way interaction effect of follower’s trustworthiness and workload on leader empowering behaviour*



**Discussion**

We predicted that the more leaders experience workload, the less motivated they will be to take carefully account of their follower's trustworthiness in their empowering behaviour. To show this we manipulated leader's workload and the trustworthiness of the follower. The results of Study 2 supported our prediction. When the workload was low, leader's trust in their follower had a positive effect on their empowering decision. When workload was high, on the contrary, leaders did not take account of their follower's trustworthiness when making their empowering decision.

In Study 3, we replicate the findings of Study 1 and Study 2 in a field setting. Study 1 and Study 2 looked separately at the effects of accountability and workload. The setting of Study 3 enabled us to look at the relationship between trust and accountability and trust and workload in one design, determining the independent contribution of the trust x accountability and the trust x workload interaction to leader empowering behaviour.

We used this opportunity to not only test Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 with a sample of leaders in organizations, but also with a sample from a different country. Study 3 focused on a sample from the United Kingdom, allowing us to determine whether our findings also replicate across countries.

### **Study 3**

#### **Method**

Three hundred seventy five leaders (mean age 41.74,  $SD = 15.28$ ) were asked to fill out a survey to rate their followers and themselves. The participants were members of an internet research panel and were as such asked to answer the survey. The leaders had to answer a filter question. Only leaders who were leading at least three subordinates participated in

the study; 34.05% of the leaders were leading between three and five subordinates, 65.95% of leaders were leading more than five subordinates. The leaders were asked to answer the survey with in mind the subordinate which surname was first alphabetically. The research was conducted in the United Kingdom.

### **Measures**

Leader Empowering Behaviour was assessed by using the 17 items of the Leader Empowering Behaviour Scale Questionnaire (LEBQ) developed by Konczak et al. (2000). Respondents were asked to rate their behaviour on a 7-points scale (ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 7 = completely agree). The trust, workload and accountability scales were the same as the one used in Study 1 and Study 2. *Trust in the follower* was measured with an 8 items scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ). An example of an item is "I trust that my follower behaves in a fair way when dealing with others." *Workload* was measured with a 3 items scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ) developed by Furda (1995). An example of an item is "I usually have enough time to finish my work". *Accountability* was measured with a 5-item scale ( $\alpha = .75$ ). An example of an item is "I am accountable for the good course of events".

## Results

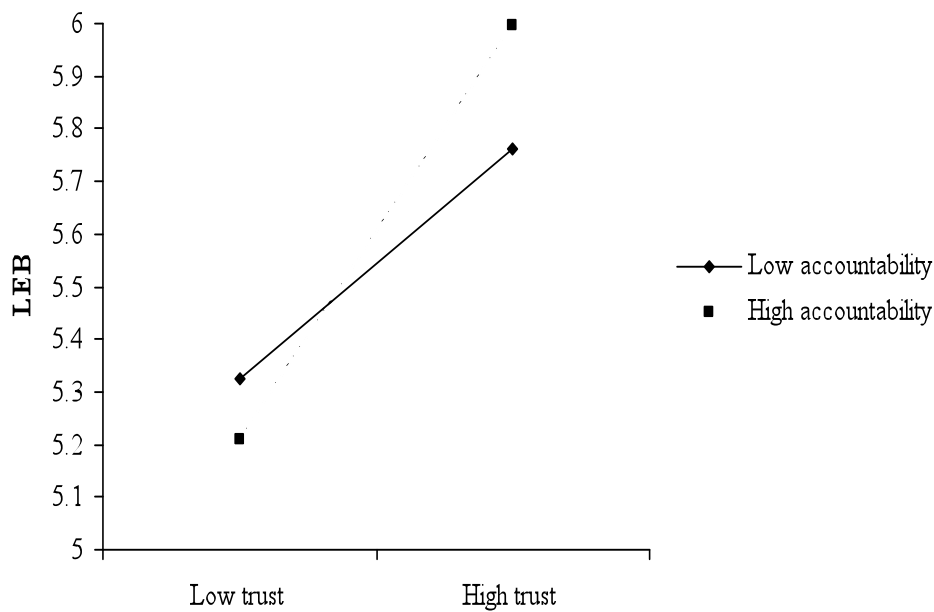
**Table 1***Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-correlation, Study 3*

	M	SD	1	2	3
1 trust	5.65	.79	-		
2 accountability	3.94	1.02	-.01	-	
3 workload	5.39	1.13	.14**	.12*	-
4 leader empowering behaviour	5.56	.61	.51**	.12*	.21**

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ **Leader empowering behaviour**

A hierarchical regression was performed with empowering leadership behaviour as the dependent variable and leaders' trust in their follower, accountability of the leader and workload of the leader as independent variables. The independent variables were centered, following the indications of Aiken & West (1991). The results revealed a relationship between trust and leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ , and a relationship between workload and leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = .07$ ,  $p = .004$ . The relationship between leader's accountability and leader empowering behaviour was not significant,  $\beta = .32$ ,  $p = .27$ . As expected, the two-way interaction between leaders' trust in their follower and accountability of the leader was significant,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $p = .003$ . We conducted simple slopes analysis following Aiken & West (1991). When accountability was high, trust in the follower had a positive influence on leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ . When accountability was low trust had a positive relationship with leader empowering behaviour too, but weaker than when accountability was high,  $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3**  
*Two-way interaction effect follower’s trustworthiness and accountability on leader empowering behaviour*



As expected, the two-way interaction between leaders’ trust in their follower and workload of the leader was significant,  $\beta = -.06, p = .04$ . Leaders empowered their followers more when workload was high and they trusted their followers more. We conducted simple slopes analysis. When workload was low, trust had a positive relationship with leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = .45, p < .001$ . When workload was high, trust in the follower also had a positive relationship with leader empowering behaviour, but weaker,  $\beta = .32, p < .001$ . (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**  
*Two-way interaction effect of follower’s trustworthiness and workload on leader empowering behaviour*



**Discussion**

The results of Study 3 replicated the findings of Study 1. The more leaders reported to be accountable for the actions and results of their followers, the more they took account of the trustworthiness of their followers. The relationship between leader’s trust in their followers and leader empowering behaviour was positive for both low and high accountable leaders; However, the more accountable leaders were for the actions and results of their follower, the more they took into consideration their trusts in their followers when empowering them.

The findings of Study 3 also replicated the findings of Study 2, showing that the more workload leaders are experiencing, the less motivated they were to take account of their follower's trustworthiness. Leader's trust in their followers had a positive relationship with leader empowering behaviour for leaders experiencing a high workload as well as for leaders experiencing a low workload; however, the more workload leaders were experiencing, the less they took into consideration their trusts in their followers when making empowering their follower. In combination, the findings support the conclusion that leaders with a higher level of epistemic motivation are more careful when taking their empowering decision.

The present study replicated the results of Study 1 and Study 2 not only in an organizational setting, but it also shows that the findings of the present studies replicate across countries. The results also showed that the effects predicted in Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 are independent of each other.

### **General Discussion**

When adequately used, employee empowerment has proven to be a very efficient tool (Carson & King, 2005; Conger, 1989; Forrester, 2000), as it makes more full use of the employee's potential. However, a lot is still unknown about the motivations behind leader empowering behaviour. For this reason, it is crucial to gain a better understanding of the processes behind leader empowering behaviour. We show that leader empowering behaviour depends not only on the trust leaders have in their followers but also on the leader's epistemic motivation. The results of our studies support our predictions and support the more general conclusion that leader epistemic motivation moderates the influence of trust on leader empowering behaviour.

***Theoretical implications***

By focusing on the determinants of leader empowering behaviour, our research extends previous research on empowerment and sets a first step in reaching a better understanding of the phenomenon of empowerment from the leader's perspective. The present study shows that to understand empowering leadership it is necessary to take leader epistemic motivation into account. More broadly, the present results are relevant for several theoretical approaches. First, the present results extend research on trust. If previous research has demonstrated a relationship between (psychological) empowerment and follower's trust in their leaders (e.g., Ergeneli, Saglam, & Metin, 2007; Moye & Henkin, 2006), the focus of the research was again on the follower. In the present study, we look at trust as an antecedent of leadership behaviour instead of a consequence of leadership behaviour showing that not only the follower's trust in the leader but also the leader's trust in the follower is important to develop an effective leader-follower relationship. Second, our research extends research on empowering behaviour by identifying antecedents of leader empowering behaviour. Our results show that the leader's epistemic motivation acts as a moderator of leader empowering behaviour.

The present research also opens a research agenda for the future. Indeed, other antecedents of epistemic motivation may play a moderating role in leader empowering behaviour. Antecedents of epistemic motivation can be situational or dispositional in nature. In the present study, we focused on two situational antecedents of leader empowering behaviour: accountability and workload. However, it would be interesting to see how dispositional factors that are proposed to reflect dispositional differences in epistemic motivation, like need for cognitive closure (Kruglanski, 2004) or need for cognition (Cacioppo, 1982), influence leader empowering behaviour. Need for cognitive closure represents a stable individual disposition reflecting the extent to which individuals value



cognitive closure and as a consequence prioritize closure over reaching a more in-depth understanding of the situation at hand (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Consequently, based on the results of the present study, we can expect that leader's need for closure influences the relationship between leader's trust in their followers and leader empowering behaviour in such a way that the positive effect of leaders trust in the follower would be stronger for leaders with a low need for cognitive closure than for leaders with a high need for cognitive closure. In the same line of reasoning, leader's need for cognition could play a similar role. Need for cognition represent the extent to which people engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive activities. People high in the need for cognition are more likely to form their attitudes by paying close attention to relevant information, whereas people low in the need for cognition are more likely to rely on heuristics and quick-and-dirty information processing. Based on the present results, we can expect that leader's need for cognition influences the relationship between leader's trust in their followers and leaders' empowering behaviour in such a way that the positive effect of leader's trust in the follower would be stronger for leaders with a high need for cognition than for leaders with a low need for cognition.

It would also be interesting to look at the effect of situational factors that are proposed to reflect situational differences in epistemic motivation, like mental fatigue (Webster, Richter, & Kruglanski, 1996). Mental fatigue increases the perceived difficulty of cognitive operations making up complex human judgment, which in turn may increase the desire for an epistemic state of cognitive certainty (Kruglanski, 1990). Based on the results of the present study, it is logical to expect that when fatigue renders information processing costly leaders may value cognitive closure more and take their followers' trustworthiness less into account when empowering their followers.

***Practical implications***

The current study also has practical implications. Companies often struggle when implementing empowering programs. If leader empowering behaviour is based on follower's trustworthiness, some situations alter the motivation leaders have to be led by follower's trustworthiness to make their empowering decision. Clearly, trust building is not only about trust in leadership, but also about trust in the followers. If employee empowerment is highly beneficial for the companies, the results of the present research show that it is necessary for companies to create conditions that do not cloud the leader's ability to take an adequate empowering decision. We showed that leaders experiencing a high workload are less motivated to take account of their follower's trustworthiness when taking their empowering decision. A high workload affects the quality of the leader's empowering decisions and companies would greatly benefit to keep the leader's workload to a level that enables a well-informed decision. Also, results show that the more leaders are accountable for the actions and results of their follower, the more they take account of their follower's trustworthiness before making their empowering decision. As a result, the more leaders are accountable for their followers, the more crucial it becomes for the followers to stress their trustworthiness. Organizations have widely invested in improving the performance of their employee by offering them trainings or courses to develop themselves further. However, organizations would also greatly benefit to make their employee aware of the ethical consequences of their actions. Indeed, employees might not always realize how some of their actions come across on people. Making employees aware that their actions may be interpreted as unethical or inconsistent may improve their trustworthiness in the eyes of their leader. Indeed, the present study shows that leaders actually care about their follower's integrity and that their trust in their follower's integrity influences their empowering decision.

***Limitations and future research***

This study has, of course, its weaknesses and its limitations. We used experimental and field data to test our hypotheses so that the strength of one method would compensate for the weakness of the other (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). The experimental studies (Study 1 & Study 2) enable us to draw conclusions regarding causality whereas the field study (Study 3) enables us to study the occurrence of the predicted relationship in organizational settings. As both methodologies lead to the same conclusions, we can have sufficient confidence in the present results. However, our results would have been even more convincing if our field data, instead of leaders' rating of their own behaviour, would have included the followers' ratings of their leader's behaviours. Therefore, it would be valuable to extend the current test of our hypothesis by including follower's rating of their leader in the analysis. However, it seems that only evaluative ratings of managers' effectiveness are more biased than other's ratings (Atkins & Woods, 2000). Indeed, when Malloy and Janowski (1992) applied the statistical analysis of Kenny's (1991) social relation model to perceptions of leadership, self and other perceptions appeared to be highly similar and in general quite accurate (cf. Eagly & Carly, 2003).

The present research does not enable us to make a judgment of the effectiveness of leader empowering behaviour by high versus low accountable leaders and by leaders experiencing low versus high workload. Indeed, while the results show that the more accountable leaders are, the more they take account of the trustworthiness of their followers to make their empowering decision, the results do not tell us if this is beneficiary for the follower's performance. We would expect that empowerment of followers by highly accountable leaders and leaders experiencing low workload is more effective in terms of followers performance than empowerment of followers from low accountable leaders and leaders experiencing high workload. For a better

understanding of the behaviour of those leaders, it would be valuable if further research looks at the performance of those followers.

### ***Conclusion***

This research provides a first step in a yet virtually unexplored research area: the determinants of leader empowering behaviour. Also, the present research addresses the influence of epistemic motivation in the process of leader empowering behaviour showing that higher epistemic motivation leads leaders to take more account of their trust in their followers. Besides showing first insight in the empowering leadership process, our research also suggests a research agenda for the future. Future research may consider other roots of epistemic motivation such as individual differences in need for closure or need for cognition.



## Chapter 4

# The influence of trust and gender on leader empowering behaviour: a mediation analysis

*The present study investigates the influence of gender and conscientiousness on leader empowering behavior. We propose that female leaders are in a more precarious position than male leaders and that, as a consequence, female leaders are more hesitant to empower their followers. We expect this gender difference to be more evident the higher the leader's conscientiousness. In a multi-source survey of 102 leader-follower dyads we find evidence for this hypothesized leader gender x conscientiousness interaction on leader empowering behavior, and show that it is mediated by leaders' trust in their follower. We also map the potential consequences of these differential levels of empowering leadership by showing that through the mediating process of empowering leadership the same leader gender x conscientiousness interaction obtains. We discuss how these findings offer additional insights in the challenges faced by female as compared with male leaders*

Leadership and gender has been the topic of numerous studies examining gender differences in leadership style and capacity to lead, comparing the performance of female leaders to those of male leaders or showing that female leaders suffer from the negative stereotypes about their gender. Interest in gender differences in leadership has arisen from the great increase of female participation in the work force in the past decennia and from the recognition that stereotypical attitudes can cause discrimination and impair the career progression of female leaders (Eagly, 2007; Powell & Ansic, 1997). As a result the extensive literature on gender and leadership has build a great vault of knowledge about gender and leadership. However, despite current trends in organizational psychology to encourage power sharing and followers involvement in decision making, little empirical research has been conducted investigating the impact of gender on more empowering forms of leadership (Denmark, 1993; DiMaggio, 2001; Eagly, 2003; Forrester, 2000, Hollander, 1992; Mills & Ungson, 2003).

In spite of the intensive research effort that has been directed to understand the influence of gender in leadership processes, researchers have largely omitted the potential influence gender may have in the process of empowerment, a leadership style that implies the sharing of power and responsibilities with the subordinates. Indeed, if the influence of gender on risk taking behaviours is well documented in the literature, few or no empirical studies have looked at the influence gender may have on leadership behaviours that put the leader in a vulnerable position, like it is the case with empowering behaviours. The aim of this study is to understand how gender affects the empowering behaviour of leaders. In this study we show that individual differences in leader conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992) enhance the gender differences in empowering behaviour, and that the gender by conscientiousness interaction is mediated by leader's trust in their followers. As a second step in this reasoning, we also examine the influence of the predicted interaction on two outcomes variables: follower's job satisfaction and follower's

organizational commitment. We show that this relationship is mediated by leader empowering behaviour.

### ***Gender and leadership***

In the past decades the number of women in managerial position has risen significantly, lessening the attitudinal prejudice against female leaders. However, numerous studies have shown that despite the advances in numerical representation, women still suffer from the “think manager, think male” phenomenon (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002; Schein, 1975; Sczesny, 2003), where the characteristics associated with successful managers are perceived to be more likely to be held by a man than by a woman. However, because there has been no attention to where in an organization’s hierarchy the ratio men to women is balanced and where it is not, the increase in number of women in the workforce has been largely ineffective at producing desired outcomes for women. Therefore, with no or few women in positions of power, gender may persist as a salient category with negative consequences for women (Ely, 1995).

Indeed, one of the biggest impediments for women in the workplace is that there is still an enduring stereotype in all industrialized countries that equates management with being male (Antal & Izraeli, 1993). Despite their investment in higher education and a greater commitment to management as a career as well as equal opportunity legislation, women have not succeeded to break through to managerial positions (Adler & Izraeli, 1994). As a result, women who aspire to management positions have to face the stereotypes of their being unfit for the role (Powell et al., 2002). These stereotypes disadvantage women at all levels of management (Powell, 1999). As a result, female managers may experience the need to prove they are equally qualified for managerial positions as their male counterparts (Denmark, 1993). Results of several



meta-analysis (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995) showed that female leaders are equally effective as male leaders. However, research has shown that women's competence is inferred to be lower than that of men, even when they objectively perform at the same level (Foschi, 1996). Women's accomplishments, though identical to a man's, are often undervalued and their work is considered as inferior (Heilman, 1995; Nieva & Gutek, 1980).

Because women are perceived to fit less well in managerial positions than men, their level of competence is questioned and they are stereotyped as being less effective managers than men (Bergeron, Block & Echtenkamp, 2006). This put female managers in a vulnerable position because their gender, which is highly salient to others, can be quickly blamed for any failings (Eagly, 2007). Over the past decades, female leaders, like members of minorities, have consistently had to prove their value more than men had to - their behaviour being more salient than the one of male leaders (Hogue, Yoder, & Ludwig, 2002; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). In their desire to prove themselves female leaders may be less inclined to empower their followers than male leaders. Female leaders may experience empowerment, implying sharing power with followers as being more risky than male leaders do. As a result, the more motivated female leaders are to do their job properly and to achieve good results and performance the less they may be motivated to engage in risky leadership behaviours.

### ***Leader Empowering Behaviour and trust in the follower***

In the past decades, organizational research has shifted its focus from a leader-dominated view to a broader one, utilizing concepts of power sharing and follower involvement (Denmark, 1993; Forrester, 2000). More and more, researchers in the field of leadership have recognized the competitive advantage of empowered employees (Forrester, 2000). Indeed, giving greater authority and responsibility to

employees permits the enhancement of followers' participation and more fully engages their abilities (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Yun, Cox, & Sims, 2006).

The concept of empowerment has been widely researched and knows two conceptualizations in the literature: it is seen either as a relational construct or as a motivational construct (Conger, 1989; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The first approach defines empowerment in the organizational context and focuses on the behaviour of the leader. This relational approach to empowerment aims at reducing the dependencies that make it difficult to get the job done by delegating power from the leader to the follower (Burke, 1986; Lawler, 1992; Leach, Wall, & Jackson, 2003). The second approach, however, focuses on the consequences of leader's behaviour and defines empowerment as a four-dimensional psychological state characterized by a sense of perceived control, perceptions of competence, and internalization of the goals and objectives of the organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Leach et al., 2003; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). This approach defines empowerment as enabling process rather than a delegating process (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

With regards to our current research question, the former conception of empowerment is thus more proximal to our research question than the latter. This approach is consistent with the definition of empowerment used by Konczak, Stelly, and Trusty (2000) to develop their measurement of leader empowering behaviour. Konczak et al. (2000) identified six dimensions of leader empowering behaviour: delegation of authority, accountability, self-directed decision making, information sharing, skill development, and coaching for innovative performance. These six dimensions express perfectly the present issue and were compared with other existing instruments, including Spreitzer psychological empowerment measure. The correlation between the six dimensions and psychological empowerment were moderate to large.

Employee empowerment, when used adequately, has been seen to unleash employees' potential, enhance their motivation, allow them to be more adaptive and receptive to their environment, and minimize bureaucratic hurdles that slow responsiveness (Forrester, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996). If, in theory, leaders adhere massively to the concept of empowerment, practice has shown that leaders differ greatly in the extent to which they implement it (Argyris, 1998). Nevertheless, little or no research has addressed the reason for the great disparities in implementation of empowerment by leaders and therefore looked at the determinants of leader empowering behaviour.

One important aspect of empowerment is that once empowered, employees can make decisions that can have a significant impact on leaders' ability to achieve their goals. This loss of control makes leaders more dependent on their subordinates and it is therefore crucial for leaders to make a well-informed decision. In fact, most managers recognize that their job security and career progression depend on achieving what organizations demand of them. Partly for this reason, they tend to see their security as being more at risk if they depend on others (Forrester, 2000).

Researchers have found that, in general, women tend to have a greater risk aversion than men (Croson & Buchan, 1999; Cox & Deck, 2002; Levin, Snyder, & Chapman, 1988). When the decision is inherently risky, women tend to display less trust in the other than men would in the same situation (Chaudhuri, Sopher, & Strand, 2002). For female leaders, the fear to confirm the stereotype that women are not as good leaders as men or the realization that they have to show outstanding performance may render the risk inherent to empowerment even more salient. Indeed, for a woman, a leadership position is not immediately seen as legitimate by others and the need to prove that they are equally effective as leaders may render them wearier of the risk they are taking. As a result female leaders may be more conservative in their trust in their followers than men would be.

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) define trust as 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor'. Gender may moderate the leaders willingness to be exposed to uncertain outcomes. As a matter of facts, female leaders, due to the stereotypes they face, may be less willing than men to be vulnerable to the actions of their subordinates. Indeed, if their subordinates do not act according to the trust leaders have placed in them, the level of competence of female leaders may be questioned and judged according to the stereotype that women are less fit than men to hold a managerial position.

Individual differences in the dedication to carefully and with high quality accomplishing the job may have different outcomes for the behaviour of men and women. Indeed, the more it matters for an individual to deliver high quality work, the more the risks inherent to a behaviour and or a decision may be salient for the individual. In other words, individual differences in conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992) may influence the relationship between gender and empowering leadership.

### ***Conscientiousness of the leader***

Conscientiousness has been identified as one of the five basic factors of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991) and is a dimension that contrasts scrupulous, well-organized, and diligent people with lax, disorganized, and careless individuals. Several studies have investigated the relationship between the five different dimensions of the Five Factors Model and found consistently a positive relation between conscientiousness and job performance. Research has shown that conscientiousness is a good predictor of the way people will act in a work situation - some have seen conscientiousness as an indicator of the individual's volition to work hard (Barrick & Mount, 1991) - and suggest

that conscientiousness is positively related to leadership effectiveness (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). People scoring high on conscientiousness are taking more careful decision because they are more driven to do their work accurately. Indeed, conscientiousness is a good indicator of how responsible people will feel to do their work properly. In a meta-analysis, Judge et al. (2002) found conscientiousness to be strongly correlated with leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness. People scoring high in conscientiousness are more careful in their decision-making, more goal-oriented, and more organized. On the other hand, people scoring low in conscientiousness are careless, irresponsible, and tend to take impulsive decisions (Goldberg, 1990; Mount & Barrick, 1995).

Because the consequences of a wrongly taken decision may be more harmful for women than for men it is reasonable to expect that men and women may be affected differently by their conscientiousness at work. Female leaders' behaviour may be more affected by their conscientiousness than male leaders' behaviour, in the sense that it matters more for female leaders to minimize the risks inherent in empowerment, especially if delivering high quality work is important for them. For that reason, the more importance female leaders attach to a job done properly, the more cautious they may be when sharing power and responsibilities with their followers. With other words, the more conscientious female leaders are, the more cautious they will be when empowering their followers. Male leaders on the other hand should not feel the same pressure and their empowering leadership behaviour should therefore be less contingent on their conscientiousness.

*Hypothesis 1: Leaders' conscientiousness moderates the effect of gender of the leader on leader empowering behaviour such that conscientiousness affects the empowering behaviour of female leaders more than the empowering behaviour of male leaders.*

*Hypothesis 2: Leader's conscientiousness moderates the effect of gender of the leader on leader's trust in the followers such that conscientious affects female leaders' trust more than male leaders' trust.*

As a consequence, we can expect trust in the follower to be a mediator between the moderated effect of conscientiousness and gender of the leader on leader empowering behaviour.

*Hypothesis 3: Trust in the follower will mediate the moderated effect of conscientiousness and gender of the leader on leader empowering behaviour.*

As a second step in our reasoning, is it interesting to look at the reaction of followers to their leaders' behaviour. If it is crucial to understand why leaders behave the way they do, it is also important to have some understanding of the consequences of leader behaviour on employees. Obviously, understanding the factors that impact a leader's behaviour is not necessary if there is no link between the leader's behaviour and meaningful outcomes. One first logical step is to look at followers' job satisfaction as employee well-being on the job is an important organizational outcomes in and of itself and moreover one with potentially favourable consequences for employee performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001)

### ***Job satisfaction***

Job satisfaction is an important outcome variable that has been defined as the feelings employees have about their job in general (Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989). Numerous studies have identified the positive impact follower's job satisfaction has for the employee and the company (Cass, Faragher, & Cooper, 2003; Gavin & Mason, 2004;

Ivancevich, 2003; Judge & Illies, 2004; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Saari & Judge, 2004; Wegge, Schmidt, Parkes, & van Dick, 2007).

Many factors are thought to influence job satisfaction. One of them is autonomy (McNeese-Smith 1997, Chen & Lin 2002). Autonomy is also one of the characteristics of the Job Characteristics Theory that specifies the tasks conditions under which individuals are predicted to prosper in their work (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (1976) predicts that employees who are given more autonomy in their work feel more responsible for the outcome of their work and, as a result, feel more satisfied with their job than employees who are given less autonomy. By empowering their employees, organizations increase their employees' sense of control of their work. Job satisfaction on the other hand reflects the work environment and the job characteristics (Karsh, Booske, & Sainfort, 2005) and many empirical studies have found the expected relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction (Laschinger, Finigan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2001; Laschinger et al., 2004; Spreitzer, 1995). Followers who could participate in the decision making process showed higher job satisfaction than those who could not participate in the decision making process (Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Schweiger & Leana, 1986). In the present study, we aim to contribute to the existing literature by showing that leader empowering behaviour mediates the moderated effect of leader gender and leader's conscientiousness on follower's job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 4: Leader empowering behaviour mediates the moderated relationship of leader gender and conscientiousness with job satisfaction such that the more leaders empower their followers the higher follower are job satisfaction is.*

### ***Commitment***

In the same line of reasoning, it is interesting to investigate how differences in empowering behaviour from male and female leaders will affect follower's organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is important to researchers and organizations because of the desire to retain a strong workforce. Researchers and practitioners are keenly interested in understanding the factors that influence an individual's decision to stay or leave an organization. Indeed, committed employees constitute a stable and motivated workforce willing to make extra efforts or even sacrifices for the organization and more frequently present (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979; Sagie, 1998). Organizational commitment is also negatively related to turnover as committed employees less frequently leave the organization voluntarily than non-committed ones (Jaros, 1997; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Toponytsky, 2002; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Somers, 1995).

Kanter's (1977) structural empowerment – which is comparable to relational empowerment - has been found to predict organizational commitment by several researchers (McDermott, Laschinger, & Shamian, 1996; Wilson & Laschinger, 1994). Researchers have also linked psychological empowerment to organizational commitment (Kraimer, Seibert, & Liden, 1999; Spreitzer, 1995). These studies suggest that empowerment – relational as well as psychological – has a positive relationship with organizational commitment. It is therefore in the interest of the company that leaders empower their followers, as the employees who are the most empowered are also those displaying a higher sense of organizational commitment. Here again, our aim is to add to the literature by showing that leader empowering behaviour mediates the moderated effect of leader gender and leader's conscientiousness on follower's organizational commitment.



*Hypothesis 5: Leader empowering behaviour mediates the moderated relationship of leader gender and conscientiousness with organizational commitment such that the more leaders empower their followers the higher follower organizational commitment is.*

## **Method**

We tested our hypotheses in a cross-sectional survey. 102 dyads of leaders and their followers were asked to fill out a survey. Hundred and two store managers (mean age 42.39,  $SD = 10.56$ ) were asked to fill out a survey to rate their followers and themselves. 54.9 % were male, 45.1% were female. Hundred and two followers (mean age 27.29,  $SD = 8.23$ ) were asked to fill out a survey to rate their leaders and themselves. 48 % were male, 52% were female. The leaders were asked to choose the employee whose name started first alphabetically to answer the questionnaire. If the employee whose name started first alphabetically did not wish to participate in the study, the employee whose name was second alphabetically was asked to participate in the study and so on.

## **Measures**

*Leader Empowering Behaviour* was assessed by using the 17 items of the Leader Empowering Behaviour Scale Questionnaire (LEBQ) developed by Konczak, et al. (2000). Respondents were asked to rate their behaviour on a 7-points scale (ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 7 = completely agree). *Trust in the follower* was measured with a 4-item scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ,  $M = 5.04$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) adapted from Mayer et al, (1995). An example of an item is "I trust that my follower behaves in a fair way when dealing with others". *Conscientiousness* was measured by a 10-item scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ,  $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = .92$ ) developed by Goldberg, Johnson, Eber, Hogan, Ashton, Cloninger and Gough (2006). An example of an item is "I never leave a job

unfinished". *Job satisfaction* was measured with a 5-item scale ( $\alpha = .92$ ,  $M = 4.93$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1980). An example of an item is "Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job". *Commitment* was measured with a 4-item scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ,  $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) adapted from Mowday, Steers, and Porter's (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. An example of an item is "I am feeling highly involved in this organization".

## Results

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for all variables are displayed in Table 1. Even though these measures partly derived from different sources, the correlations between the trust, leader empowering behaviour, job satisfaction, and commitment were quite high. We therefore conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to establish whether the four-factor model represents a better fit than alternative models with fewer factors. Fit indices showed that the four dimensional model fitted the data satisfactorily. We use chi-square, Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) (Tucker-Lewis Index), Confirmatory Fit Index (CFI), and Standardized Root Mean square Residual (SRMR) to assess the fit of our models. Chi-square never reached the desired level of non-significance. However, this is a common problem of complex models and the model might still fit the data well (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1998). CFI and NNFI scores of .90 to 1.00 and SRMR scores under .08 indicate a good data fit (Brown & Cudeck, 1993; Dunn, Everitt, & Pickles, 1993). The NNFI, the CFI and the SRMR were all around the recommended standard ( $\chi^2 = 283.17$ ,  $df = 129$ , NNFI = .89, CFI = .90, SRMR = .05). The fit of a three dimensional model combining the outcome variables satisfaction and commitment in one factor ( $\chi^2 = 499.85$ ,  $df = 135$ , NNFI = .73, CFI = .76, SRMR = .41), a two dimensional model with one factor representing leader trust and the other representing the three follower-rated variables ( $\chi^2 = 564.22$ ,  $df = 135$ , NNFI

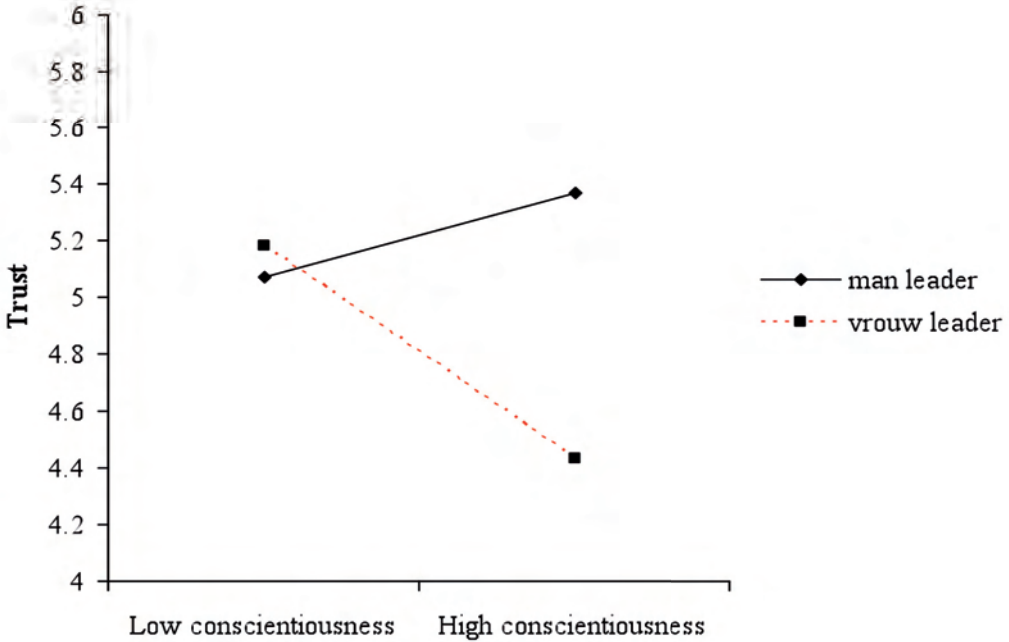
= .69, CFI = .72, SRMR = .35), and the one dimensional model ( $\chi^2 = 489.60$ ,  $df = 135$ , NNFI = .70, CFI = .77, SRMR = .08) were less satisfactory.

### ***Leader empowering behaviour***

A hierarchical regression was performed with empowering leadership behaviour as the dependent variable and leader conscientiousness and leader gender as independent variables. We centered the independent variables, following the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991). In Step 1 we entered the centered main effects. In Step 2 we entered the interaction into the equation. The results revealed a relationship between leader's gender and leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = -.20$ ,  $p < .035$ . As expected, the interaction between leaders' gender and leader's conscientiousness was significant,  $\beta = -.37$ ,  $p < .001$ . We conducted simple slopes analysis following Aiken and West (1991). Conscientiousness had a negative effect on the leader empowering behaviour of female leaders  $\beta = -.54$ ,  $p = .003$ , but a positive effect on the leader empowering behaviour of male leaders  $\beta = .33$ ,  $p = .018$ .

**Figure 1**

*Two-way interaction effect of leader gender and leader's conscientiousness on leader empowering behaviour*

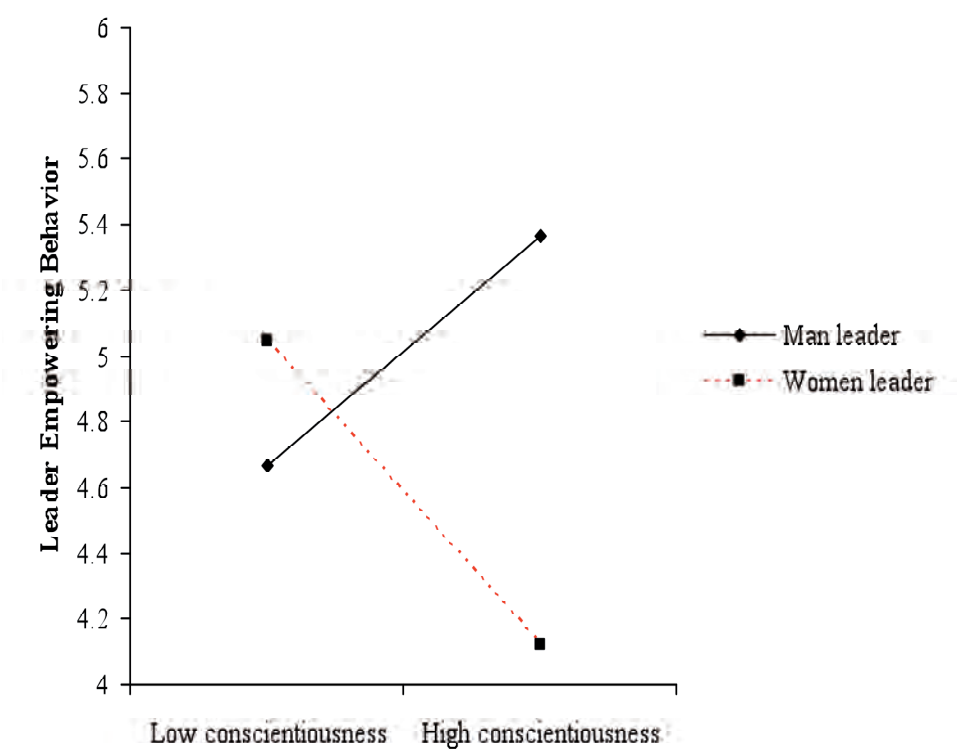


### **Trust**

Similarly, a hierarchical regression was performed with empowering leadership behaviour as the dependent variable and leader's conscientiousness and leader's gender as independent variables. The independent variables were again centered, following the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991). As expected, the interaction between leader gender and leader conscientiousness was significant,  $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p = .018$ . We conducted simple slopes analysis following Aiken and

West (1991). Conscientiousness had no effect on the trust male leaders had in their followers  $\beta = .11, p = .39$ , but a negative effect on the trust female leaders had in their followers  $\beta = -.38, p = .02$ .

**Figure 2**  
*Two-way interaction effect of leader gender and leader’s conscientiousness on trust*

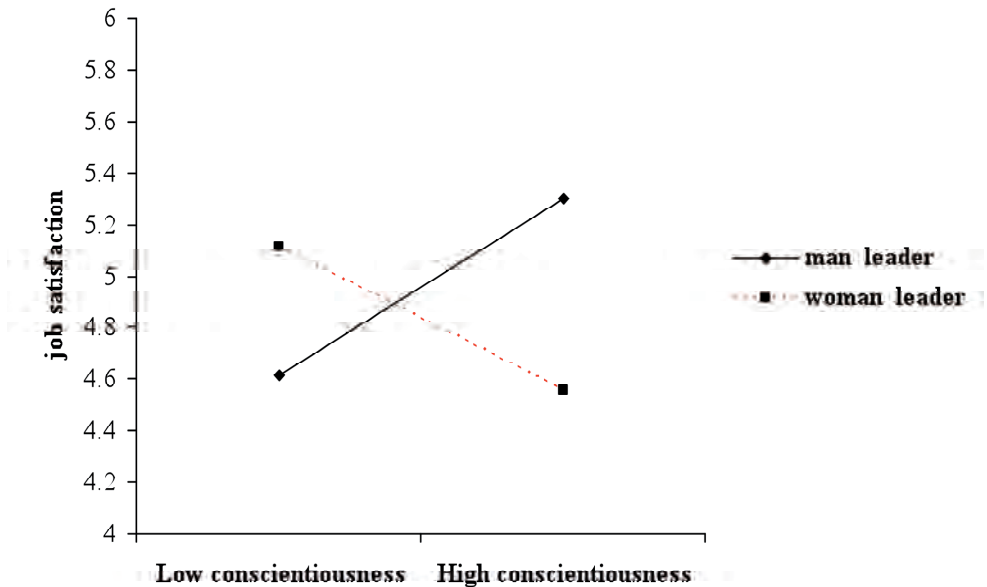


**Job satisfaction**

Following the same procedure a hierarchical regression investigated the relationship between the two independent variables - leader gender and leader conscientiousness - and follower's job satisfaction. As expected, the interaction between leader gender and leader conscientiousness was significant,  $\beta = -.29, p = .004$ . We conducted simple slopes analysis following Aiken and West (1991). The results revealed that the more conscientious female leaders were, the lower the job satisfaction of their followers,  $\beta = -.33, p = .041$ . However, the more conscientious male leaders were, the higher the job satisfaction of their followers,  $\beta = .34, p = .008$ .

**Figure 3**

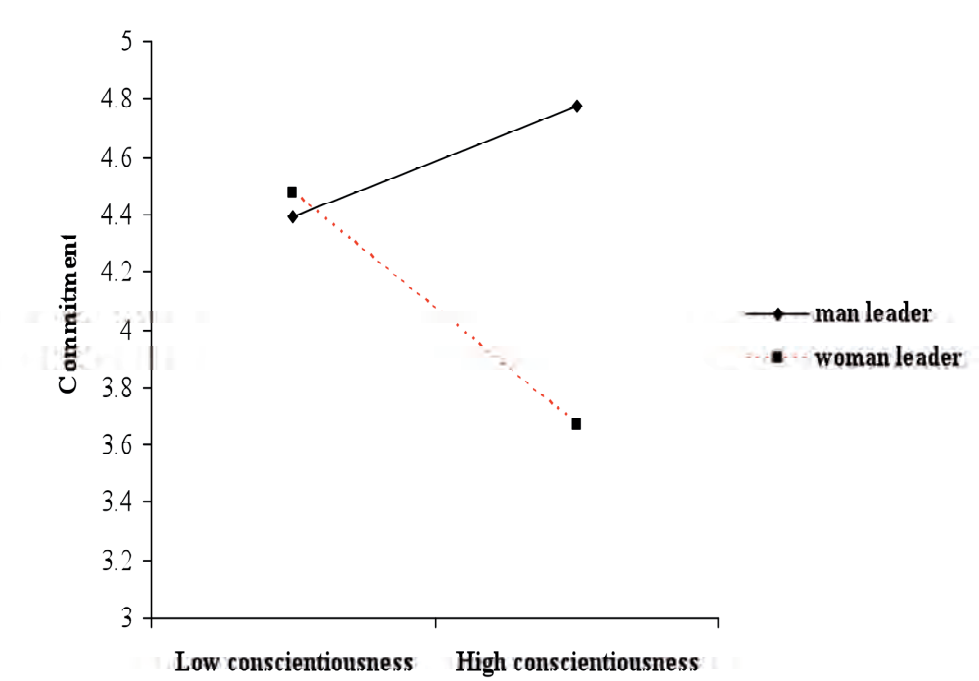
*Two-way interaction effect of leader gender and leader's conscientiousness on follower's job satisfaction*



**Commitment**

We also used the same procedure to test the interaction between leader conscientiousness and leader gender on follower’s organizational commitment. As expected, the interaction between leader gender and leader conscientiousness was significant,  $\beta = -.21, p = .039$ . We conducted simple slopes analysis following Aiken and West (1991). The more conscientiousness female leaders were the lower the organizational commitment of their followers,  $\beta = -.47, p = .05$ . The conscientiousness of male leaders did not affect the organizational commitment of their followers,  $\beta = .17, p = .35$ .

**Figure 4**  
*Two-way interaction effect of leader gender and leader’s conscientiousness on follower’s organizational commitment*



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**Mediation Analysis**

Following the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986) and Edwards and Lambert (2007), we used path analysis to test the mediated relationships in our model illustrated in Figure 1a. In short, our assumption is that leader's gender moderates the influence of leader's conscientiousness to influence leader's trust in the follower, and that trust in turn leads to differences in leader empowering behaviour (trust mediates the interaction between leader gender and leader conscientiousness on leader empowering behaviour). Leader empowering behaviour, in turn, affects follower's organizational commitment. To test this model, we followed the procedures recommended by Taylor, MacKinnon, and Tein (2008) for assessing mediation in a three-path mediation model (when two mediators intervene in a series between independent and dependent variables). As a first step in this path analysis, we tested the first half of the model: the relationship between leader gender and leader conscientiousness and leader empowering behaviour and the relationship between trust and leader empowering behaviour. We regressed leader empowering behaviour on leader conscientiousness and leader gender (the independent variables) and on trust in the follower (the proposed mediator between the interaction of leader conscientiousness and leader gender on leader empowering behaviour). As expected, trust in the follower influenced leader empowering behaviour,  $\beta = .74, p < .001$ . The lower the leader's trust in the follower the lower the leader empowering behaviour.

Consistent with the procedure recommended by Taylor et al. (2008) for this type of model, we used a bootstrap procedure to test the magnitude of the indirect effect. We implemented the bootstrap by drawing 1000 random samples with replacement from the full sample, computed the indirect effect using the bootstrap sample, and constructed a bias-corrected confidence interval based on these results. The indirect effect through leader's trust in the follower from the original data set was



-4.20. The 99% interval excluded zero (-12.65, -.80), indicating a significant indirect effect through leader's trust in the follower.

As a second step in our path analysis, we then tested the full model. We regressed commitment on leader's gender and leader's conscientiousness (the independent variables), leader's trust in the follower (the "stage 1" mediator), and leader empowering behaviour (the "stage 2" mediator). As expected, leader empowering behaviour significantly affected follower's organizational commitment,  $\beta = .78, p < .001$ . The more leaders empowered their followers the higher the organizational commitment of the followers.

To assess the validity of our complete model, we again used the bootstrap procedure to test the magnitude of the indirect effects. Drawing from the regression coefficients from the original data set, the magnitude of the indirect effect through leader's trust in the follower and leader empowering behaviour was -4.26. The 99 % bias corrected confidence interval from the bootstrap sample excluded zero (-12.63; -.87), indicating that the indirect effect through leader's trust in the follower and leader empowering behaviour mediated the interaction between leader gender and leader conscientiousness on follower's organizational commitment.

We used the same procedure to test the mediation on follower's job satisfaction. As the first step identical was to the one follower's organizational commitment, we only tested the second step of the path analysis. We regressed follower's job satisfaction on leader's gender and leader's conscientiousness (the independent variables), leader's trust in the follower (the "stage 1" mediator), and leader empowering behaviour (the "stage 2" mediator). As expected, leader empowering behaviour significantly affected follower's job satisfaction,  $\beta = .72, p < .001$ . The more leaders empowered their followers the higher the job satisfaction of the followers.

To assess the validity of our complete model, we again used the bootstrap procedure to test the magnitude of the indirect effects. Drawing from the regression coefficients from the original data set, the magnitude

of the indirect effect through leader's trust in the follower and leader empowering behaviour was -1.18. The 99% bias corrected confidence interval from the bootstrap sample excluded zero (-4.00; -.24), indicating that the indirect effect through leader's trust in the follower and leader empowering behaviour mediated the relationship between leader gender and leader conscientiousness and follower job satisfaction.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to get more insight in the role gender plays in the process of empowerment. Indeed, understanding gender differences in leadership is crucial if one wants to tackle the problems female leaders face in organizational settings. The results of the present study provide insight into the psychological process underlying female leader empowering behaviour by identifying the mediating role of leader trust in the follower (Hypothesis 2 and 3) as well as the moderating role of leader conscientiousness (Hypothesis 1). Consistent with our prediction, female leaders empowered their followers less the more conscientious they were, following from their lower trust in their followers. Interestingly, however, the results also revealed that male leaders were more inclined to empower their followers the more conscientious they were. Conscientiousness did not affect male leaders and they trusted their followers the same regardless of their conscientiousness level. Also, the results showed that trust in the follower mediates the moderated effect of conscientiousness and gender on leader empowering behaviour. In addition, results gave insight in how leader's behaviour is linked to follower job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Hypothesis 4 and 5). The more empowered the followers were, the more satisfied they were with their job and the more committed they were to their organization. As a result, followers of female leaders were less satisfied with their jobs and less committed to their organization the more conscientious their leaders was.

***Theoretical implications***

The present study extends research in gender and leadership by showing the implications of gender in the process of empowerment. By identifying the mediating role of trust in the process of empowerment, this research gives first insights in the psychological process governing the empowering behaviour of male and female leaders. Female leaders are more hesitant than male leaders to trust followers and therefore less inclined to empower their followers, and this difference becomes more pronounced the more conscientious the leaders are, presumably reflecting the greater dedication to high-quality performance of more conscientious individuals (Barrick & Mount, 1991). We based this prediction on the proposition that female leaders in an effort not to confirm the stereotype that female leaders are less apt as being leaders become more wary in extending trust to followers. Ironically, by ending up with less satisfied and committed employees, female leaders may thus run the risk of confirming the stereotypic beliefs they are so carefully trying to negate. This reasoning suggests that organizational contexts in which female leaders are faced less with threatening gender stereotypes would be more conducive to female leaders' empowering behaviour. Clearly, the present study cannot speak to such contextual influences, but this would seem to be a particularly valuable avenue for future research as it could both provide further evidence for the current analysis and identify circumstances that could alleviate female leaders' precarious position.

We identified lower follower satisfaction and commitment as a consequence of female leaders' lower inclination to trust and empower followers. While this is an unfortunate and undesirable outcome of the leadership process, we emphasize that this should not be taken to imply that 'therefore' female leaders are less effective leaders. While empowering leadership behaviour contributes to leadership effectiveness, it is not the only route to effective leadership, and it is altogether possible that the female leaders in our study were no less effective than their male

counterparts in terms of for instance inspiring high-quality follower performance. The current findings thus should be taken as identifying and helping to understand the potential problems female leaders face, but they should also inspire future research identifying the alternative routes highly conscientious female leaders may take to be effective in their leadership roles.

Interestingly, results also revealed that male leaders were more inclined to empower their followers the more conscientious they were. A possible explanation is that because conscientious male leaders do not have to cope with potential negative consequences associated with potential failure, they may feel as part of their responsibility to empower their followers. While this finding was not completely anticipated – we merely expected that conscientiousness would be less likely to reduce male leaders' empowering behaviour – it only adds to the irony of the lowered empowering leadership by especially more conscientious female leaders.

In view of the current findings, it would be valuable to investigate other factors affecting the empowering behaviour of female leaders. In the present study we focused on an individual characteristic of the leader: conscientiousness. It would be a valuable extension of this perspective to see how situational factors that lead to more careful decision would influence the empowering behaviour of female leaders. The present study highlights the influence risks have on the behaviour of male and female leaders. Female leaders seem to be more sensitive to the potential consequences of the risks they are taking than men are, the consequences for men being less important than for women. It would therefore be interesting to understand how for instance accountability would influence the empowering decision of male and female leaders. Indeed, the higher the accountability, the more leaders have to explain themselves about the behaviour of their followers. For that reason, the potential threat of having to explain certain behaviours – i.e., to be accountable for it – can make leaders more carefully consider engaging in such behaviours. Our

results would suggest that this effect should be stronger for women than for men. It would also be interesting to see how being a member of a minority would influence the empowering behaviour of male and female leaders. Minorities, like female are subject to stereotypes that may impair their credibility as leaders. Our results would suggest that being a member of a minority would influence the empowering behaviour of both male and female leaders, with the effect being stronger for female members of minorities than for male members of minorities.

From the perspective of research in empowerment, the present research extends this research by identifying gender as an antecedent of leader empowering behaviour, and trust as the mediating process in this respect. These findings suggest that, gender set aside, other leadership or situational characteristics associated with leader trust in followers also affect leader empowering behaviour. Such antecedents could both concern leader characteristics that render the leaders' position more or less precarious (cf. gender; see e.g., van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003) and follower characteristics that give the leaders more or less reason to trust their follower (cf. trust reference). Although not a goal in and of itself, we may also note that the present results confirm previous findings on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, identifying empowerment as an antecedent of both follower job satisfaction and follower organizational commitment.

### ***Practical implications***

The present research has also several practical implications. First, the present study highlights the importance for companies to recognize that any hesitance of female leaders to empower their subordinates may not be due to a lack of competence but rather to a fear to confirm the negative stereotype female leaders still face on the work floor. Indeed, enough studies have shown that women and men are equally qualified as leaders. However, the more risky a leadership style, the higher the chance

for women to be judged according to the stereotypes and therefore, the more likely they are to succumb to the negative effects of stereotype threat. This may prevent women to progress to higher levels in organizations. Organizations should therefore work towards a reduction of the stereotype threat effect, as many empirical studies have shown that it helps improve the performance of the one subject to the threat (Denmark, 1993). It is, after all, in the interest of the company to create an environment in which both men and women can succeed.

Second, the present results show that companies should not based their judgment upon female leaders solely on ratings of their follower's job satisfaction and organizational commitment. We showed that the more important it was for women to deliver high quality work, the more cautious they were and the less satisfied and committed their followers were. It is true that organizations benefit from satisfied and committed employee as they are less inclined to quit and more inclined to go the extra mile for the organization. However, organizations should not discard female leaders because of this, as those female leaders may well be more motivated to deliver high quality work for the company and as already outlined in the previous we should be open to the alternative routes that highly conscientious female leaders may find to fulfil their leadership role effectively.

### ***Limitations and future research***

This study has, of course, its weaknesses and its limitations. First, the absence of a measure of stereotype threat is a limitation of this study. Therefore, we cannot definitely conclude that stereotype threat is responsible for the observed female behaviour. Although this is to be acknowledged as a limitation, there is some evidence that those female leaders behaved as would be predicted based on stereotype threat theory. It should also be pointed out that the absence of a measure of stereotype threat is a limitation in the majority of the stereotype threat studies.

Studies that actually do include a measure of stereotype threat use items measuring the perception of stereotype threat in general rather than measuring the perception of the occurrence of stereotype threat in a given study. However, we would recommend that future research would include a measure of stereotype threat as experienced in a particular organizational setting.

Second, the correlation between the measures of follower's job satisfaction and follower's organizational commitment is quite high. One can therefore question what is the added value of looking at both the concepts. However, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two concepts with a long organizational tradition that views job satisfaction and organizational commitment as two separate concepts. Indeed, commitment is a more global response to an organization and job satisfaction is more of a response to a specific job or various facets of the job. However, in the present study, the key contribution lies in the mediation by leader empowering behaviour of the interaction between leader gender and leader's conscientiousness where the added value of the results, how small they may be, are still interesting.

### ***Conclusion***

The present research provides insights in the influence of gender in leader empowering behaviour. The findings of this study suggest that negative stereotype about women in the workplace have a detrimental effect on women's willingness to empower their followers and therefore remain an obstacle for women who want to further their career in higher levels of organizations.

## **Chapter 5**

### **General discussion**

There are many reasons for leaders to empower their followers. Next to the practical immediate benefits for leaders as they are limited in time, energy and knowledge, empowerment gives the followers the needed flexibility to engage their own ability more fully in order to help the organization enhance its competitiveness (Carson & King, 2005; Conger, 1989; Forrester, 2000). But beyond business benefits, leaders must nowadays take into consideration the new expectations employees have about their job. Increasingly, employees view their job as a means of personal fulfilment and therefore expect control and influence over their own jobs. This expectation requires leaders to interact with followers in ways different from traditional leadership. This has made empowering leadership an important criterion for leadership effectiveness. For this reason, organisations have increasingly made use of empowering leadership. However, as we stated earlier in this dissertation, despite the



great interest in empowerment and empowering leadership in the past decades, a lot remains unclear about the processes underlying empowering leadership.

The research reported in this dissertation has focused on the antecedents of leader empowering behaviour. This focus fills a gap in the empowering leadership literature. Previous research has almost exclusively concentrated on the follower's responses to leader's behaviour to understand leadership effectiveness. In this dissertation, we take a new look at empowering leadership, trying to understand which factors influence the leaders' motivation to empower their followers. This approach enabled us to get new insights in the process of empowering leadership and extend our knowledge about leader behaviour. In this dissertation, we tried to understand what makes leaders effective by getting a better understanding in the motivation behind their behaviour.

We will first briefly summarize the main findings reported in chapter 2 to 4. We will then discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the present research before describing the strengths and limitations of the studies. After giving directions for future research, we will close this dissertation with an overall conclusion.

### **Summary of the main findings**

The objective of this dissertation was to better understand what makes leader effective by looking at what motivates leaders to empower their followers. The main research question of the dissertation was therefore the following:

#### ***What are the antecedents of leader empowering behaviour?***

In an attempt to answer this question, we reported the findings of six empirical studies.

In Chapter 2 we presented two experiments on the idea that leader's conscientiousness moderates the effect of the leader's trust in the follower's ability and integrity on leader empowering behaviour. In Study 1 (a laboratory experiment) we first investigated one aspect of empowering behaviour (delegation of responsibility). In Study 2 (a scenario experiment) we replicated and extended the findings of Study 1 using the six dimensions of empowering behaviour as reported by Konczac et al. (2000). The results of both studies showed that highly conscientious leaders more strongly empower employees whom integrity and ability they trust more, whereas leaders who are low in conscientiousness take their decision to empower subordinates on the basis of their trust in their subordinate's integrity, and do less strongly consider the employees ability.

In chapter 3 we reported two experiments and a cross-sectional survey. The aim of the three studies was to show the influence of epistemic motivation on leader empowering behaviour. We focused on two determinants of epistemic motivation: accountability and workload. In Study 1 we demonstrated that accountability interacts with follower trustworthiness to affect leader empowering behaviour such that leaders experiencing high accountability take more account of follower trustworthiness than leaders experiencing low accountability. In Study 2 we demonstrated that workload interacts with follower trustworthiness to affect leader empowering behaviour such that leaders experiencing high workload are less motivated to take into account their follower's trustworthiness than leaders experiencing low workload. In Study 3 we replicated the findings of Study 1 and Study 2 in a field setting, showing the independent contribution of each of the expected relationships in the empowering process.

In Chapter 4 we focused on the role of gender in the empowering process. We showed that gender moderated by the leader's level of conscientiousness, influenced the leader's empowering behaviour and

demonstrated that the relationship between leader's gender and leader's conscientiousness was mediated by the trust leader's had in their followers. Our results show that high conscientious female leaders are more hesitant to trust their followers and as a result were less inclined to empower their followers. In a second step, we showed that leader's gender moderated by the leader's level of conscientiousness influenced the follower's job satisfaction and the follower's commitment. We also demonstrated that this relationship was mediated by leader empowering behaviour. Supporting our predictions, our results show that the more empowered followers were, the more satisfied they were with their jobs and the more committed they were with the organisation. Followers were less satisfied with their job and less committed to the company when their leader was a female than when their leader was a man.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The present dissertation implies that it is important to get a better understanding of the motivation behind leader empowering behaviour. Because leaders play a critical part in the empowerment process, it is important to understand how the transfer of power and responsibility from the leader to the followers takes place.

The results from chapter 2, 3 and 4 underline the importance of trust in the empowering process. So far, if research on leadership has widely recognized the importance of trust in the leadership process, the focus has consistently been on the trust followers have in their leader (Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Tan, 1999; Ergeneli, Saglam, & Metin, 2007; Moya & Henkin, 2006; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard & Werner, 1998). Throughout our research however, we looked at trust as an antecedent of leadership behaviour instead of a consequence of leadership behaviour showing that not only the follower's trust in the leader but also the leader's trust in the follower is important to develop an effective leader-follower relationship. Few or no studies have empirically examined trust

between the leader and the follower from the leader perspective. Indeed, when looking at the influence of trust in the process of leadership effectiveness, researchers have focused on how the trust followers have in the leader moderates the effectiveness of leaders' traits or behaviours in the leadership process.

In chapter 4 we focus on the mediating role leaders' trust in the follower plays in the empowerment process. By showing the mediating effect of trust in the process of empowerment, this research gives first insights in the psychological process men and women go through before empowering their followers.

Moreover, in chapter 3 this dissertation focused on the interaction between leader's epistemic motivation and trust in the empowerment process. Leader's epistemic motivation proved to be an important moderator of trust in the empowerment process. These findings suggest that to understand empowering leadership it is necessary to take leader epistemic motivation into account. If workload and accountability has widely been studied in the leadership literature (Ammeter et al. 2004; Hall, Blass, Ferris, & Massengale, 2004; Ilies, Schwind, Wagner, Johnson, DeRue, & Ilgen, 2007; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Spector, Dwyer, & Jex, 1988; Tetlock, 1985), the present dissertation make an important contribution to the literature by focusing on leader's workload and leader's accountability, and showing that they, as antecedents of leader's epistemic motivation play a moderating role in the process of empowerment. Building on the assumption that depending on the context, leaders will be more or less motivated to take hasty decision, we focused on two situational antecedents of leader empowering behaviour: accountability and workload. These findings thus suggest that a range of antecedents of leader empowering behaviour may be found by focusing on situational determinants of leader's epistemic motivation.

These studies highlight the necessity for companies to create a work environment that do not cloud the leader's ability to take an adequate empowering decision. Leader's experiencing a high workload is

less inclined to take a well informed decision and would therefore be more inclined to display empowering behaviour based on hasty risk assessment. Our findings would also advocate companies to keep the leaders workload at level that enables them to take a well-informed decision. Also, the more leaders experience that they are accountable for their followers actions and result, the less inclined they are to empower their followers. Companies must recognize that empowerment implies that the followers must be held responsible and must feel that there are held responsible for the newly own responsibilities. This implies that companies that want to foster empowerment practices in their organisation must be consequent in their performance evaluation system and structure them in such a way that leaders who empower their followers, can do so without fear of holding the sole responsibility of the actions and performance of the follower. Followers on the other hand should be aware that the more accountable leaders are, the more relevant it is for them to stress their trustworthiness. Indeed, the more accountable leaders are the more inclined they are to take a well-informed decision and the more attention they will pay to the trustworthiness of their followers.

Another important contribution of this dissertation is made by highlighting the role of leader's characteristic in the empowerment process. If leadership and personality dimensions have already been linked in previous research (e.g., Hofmann & Jones, 2005; Judge, et al., 2002), our findings extend this research by showing the importance of leader's conscientiousness in the leader empowering decision process. In chapter 2 and chapter 4 we show how leader's conscientiousness plays an important role in determining leader empowering behaviour. In chapter 2, we show the positive effect conscientiousness has on the quality of the leader empowering decision as those leaders take a more careful decision. In chapter 4, we show that leader's conscientiousness can be a handicap for female leaders, as the carefulness that the leader's level of conscientiousness implies, seems to make them more hesitant to empower their followers. We thus add to the literature by showing how

the leader's conscientiousness influences the psychological process leaders go through before empowering their followers.

The following research implies thus that organisations should pay more attention to the conscientiousness level of leaders. Indeed, both the findings of chapter 2 and chapter 4 indicate that organisations would benefit from selecting their leaders according to their conscientiousness level. Conscientious leaders take more careful decision and this can be beneficial for companies as those leaders minimize the risks inherent to empowerment by empowering the most those they think deserve their trust the most. In chapter 4, we show that this is true for male leaders as those leaders are more motivated and more inclined to share power and responsibilities with their followers.

Furthermore, the present research contributes to the gender literature by showing the implications of gender in the process of empowerment. If gender has been the topic of intensive research in order to understand the role gender plays in the leadership process (Eagly, 2007; Powell & Ansic, 1997), researchers have largely omitted the potential influence gender may have in the process of empowerment. In the present research we show that leader's gender has a moderating effect in the empowering process by showing that in the organizational context where women need to prove their value as leaders more than men do, women tend to be more hesitant in their empowering decision than men do. We show thus that gender acts as an antecedent of leader empowering behaviour. As a result, the present dissertation implies that organisations would benefit to work towards a work environment that emphasises the equal value of men and women in a leadership position. It is after all in the interest of the company that both its male and its female leaders are able to succeed. Companies should also recognize that the hesitation female leaders display in their empowering behaviour may well be a sign that they are more motivated to do well for the organisation.

### **Strengths, limitations and future research**

In the present dissertation we used a combination of scenario studies, laboratory studies and field studies. This use of multiple research methods to test our hypotheses is clearly a strong point as the strengths of one research method may compensate for the weakness of the other (Dipboye, 1990; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). By using scenario and laboratory studies, we were able to make assumptions about the causality of the phenomenon that we studied but we could make limited claims about the generalizability of the findings in the organisational context. The surveys however, allowed for generalizability of the findings, but did not allow us to make claim about causality. It is important to note that the different methodologies have different aims. Experimental studies are conducted in order to study a phenomenon in a controlled environment where researchers can isolate the factors that are of importance in order to improve the precision of our decision. We are therefore interested in a strong internal validity as internal validity is at the centre of all causal relationships where external validity is of no interest (Brown & Lord, 1999). Survey research on the other hand is the most important measurement method researchers have to assess the occurrence of a given phenomenon in the field. The aim here is therefore to examine the relationships with a high level of external validity. However, as we showed in chapter 2, the use of different methodologies led to the same conclusions regarding the hypotheses. We can therefore have confidence in our results. For this reason, we consider the triangulation of the research methods used in this dissertation (scenario, laboratory and survey data) as a significant strength of this dissertation. Nevertheless, we would agree that replicating the data of our experimental studies in an organisational setting would be a valuable addition to those results.

If it is true that we used a student sample for our experiments, we do not have any reason to believe that this may weaken the value of our

results. Research in leadership has indeed shown that data from laboratory experiments conducted with students replicate in the field (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002, 2004; De Cremer, van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Mullenders, & Stinglhamber, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). For this reason, we see the diversity in samples (business students vs. employees of various organisations) used in the present dissertation as a strength.

In chapter 3 we report leader's rating of their empowering behaviour. According to Atkins and Woods (2000), it seems that only self ratings of managers' effectiveness are more biased than other's ratings. Indeed, when Malloy and Janowski (1992) applied the statistical analysis of Kenny's (1991) social relation model to perceptions of leadership, self and other perceptions appeared to be highly similar and in general quite accurate (cf. Eagly & Carly, 2003). Nevertheless, we would agree that our results would have been even more convincing and the quality of our data had been enhanced if our results would have included followers rating of their leaders behaviour. However, taking into consideration the fact that we know very little about the antecedents of leader empowering behaviour, replicating the findings of two experimental studies in the field merits to be considered as a strength.

In the present study, we show the crucial part that trust plays in the empowerment process. However, throughout this dissertation we measured and manipulated trust without taking into consideration how the trust between leaders and followers developed. We defined trust as character-based and focused on the leader's perception of the follower's character. The trust related concerns that the leader has about the follower are of importance as the follower may act in a way that may have significant impact on the leaders' ability to reach their goal. In everyday practice however, it may happen that the trust between the leader and the follower has been breached and that leaders must rebuild their trust in their follower. According to Lewicki and Wiethoff (2000) it is easier to break trust than to build it, and even a single incident can result in a



significant drop in the level of trust between the trustor and the trustee, if the trustee violates the expectation the trustor had about the intention of the trustee. The reason for this is that people tend to see negative actions as being more informative about a person's character than positive actions, which can simply be the result of social desirability (Ito, Larson, Smith & Cacioppo, 1998). Future research may therefore benefit to take into consideration whether followers have broken the trust their leaders had in them. A breach of trust may indeed significantly affect the leader's willingness to be vulnerable to the follower and therefore impact the leader's empowering behaviour.

Finally, it would be of particular interest to explore the influence of cultural differences in the empowerment process. Research has shown that countries differ in the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1980). In other words, there are cultural differences to be experienced in power distance. Power is of course at the heart of empowerment, and cultural differences in the way power is distributed may have a critical impact on the implementation of empowerment program. Throughout this dissertation, we did not take into consideration the fact that leaders may, due to their cultural background, feel less comfortable with the idea of empowering their followers. Indeed, individuals from high power distance culture are more familiar with centralized leadership styles, while individuals from low power distance are more familiar with leadership styles that involve delegation and autonomy (Eylon & Au, 1998). If a few studies have addressed the influence of culture in the empowerment process and recognized its importance (Eylon & Au, 1998; Yoo, Rao & Hong, 2006), no studies to our knowledge have looked at the influence cultural differences may have on some leaders in their empowering behaviour. For this reason, it would be worthwhile exploring the role power distance may play on the empowering behaviour of some leaders.

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**Conclusion**

Empowerment practices have been widely implemented by organisations throughout the world in order to adapt to today's economic market and the new needs of employees, and research on empowerment has become an important area of the leadership literature. However, when trying to understand the phenomenon of empowerment, researchers have omitted to look at the people responsible for displaying empowering behaviour. In this dissertation we showed that understanding the motivation behind leader empowering behaviour is an essential step in a better understanding of the process of empowerment itself. If we made a first step in the present study, a lot more remains to be known about the antecedents of leader empowering behaviour. This research pointed out that leaders' characteristics as well as contextual factors affect leaders' empowering behaviour. This dissertation opens a research agenda for the future by, we hope, showing that leaders should not only think "what can I do best to influence my followers?" but also "what makes me influence my followers the way I do, and is this the best way to do so?"

## **Nederlandse samenvatting**

Leiderschap is de afgelopen decennia een favoriet onderwerp voor wetenschappers geweest (Yukl, 2004). Leiderschap is inderdaad een sterke kracht die wetenschappers al honderden jaren bezig houdt. Duizenden onderzoekers uit verschillende disciplines zoals management, psychologie, sociologie of politieke wetenschappen hebben dus geprobeerd de aard van leiderschap te begrijpen. Sociale psychologen zijn verantwoordelijk voor een groot deel van de beschikbare kennis op het fenomeen van leiderschap. Hun bijdrage bouwde een indrukwekkend gewelf van kennis met betrekking tot leiderschap en de vele aspecten en vormen. Het is ook vanuit een sociaal-psychologisch standpunt dat wij leiderschap in dit proefschrift zullen benaderen en definiëren. In deze analyse is leiderschap gedefinieerd als een proces van sociale invloeden, waarin een persoon in staat is de hulp en steun van anderen in de totstandkoming van een gemeenschappelijke taak te werven.

De afgelopen jaren heeft onderzoek over leiderschap steeds meer aandacht gegeven aan vormen van leiderschap, die de nadruk leggen op het motiveren van de werknemers. Om zo efficiënt mogelijk te zijn wordt er eerder van leiders verwacht dat ze hun ondergeschikte weten te motiveren en te inspireren dan dat ze die controleren en orders laten volgen (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002). Dit heeft van empowerment een belangrijke criterium van leiderschapseffectiviteit gemaakt (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). Empowered werknemers krijgen meer autonomie en verantwoordelijkheden om hun werk uit te voeren.

Om leiderschap te onderzoeken hebben wetenschappers de nadruk gelegd op leiderseigenschappen en leidersgedragingen die tot effectieve leiderschap leiden (Fleischman & Peters, 1962; Fiedler, 1964). Deze aandacht voor leiders is logisch, daar leiders de meeste macht hebben en het meest in staat zijn om situaties te beïnvloeden. Om deze

reden hebben wetenschappers geprobeerd te begrijpen wanneer en onder welke omstandigheden moeten leiders bepaalde gedragingen vertonen, om zo effectief mogelijk hun ondergeschikten te motiveren (Chemers, 2000). Echter, daar wetenschappers de nadruk hebben gelegd op de manier hoe leiders hun ondergeschikten beïnvloeden en moeten beïnvloeden, is er weinig bekend over de manier waarop leiders zelf door hun medewerkers beïnvloed worden. Toch is het zo dat daar de relatie tussen de leider en de ondergeschikte onderling afhankelijk is dat zowel de leider als de ondergeschikte verantwoordelijk is voor de reactie en worden leiders ook beïnvloed. Het is nog onduidelijk waarom leiders bepaalde gedragingen vertonen en hoe bepaalde eigenschappen hun empowerment-gedrag beïnvloeden. Dit leidt ons tot de volgende onderzoeksvraag:

*Wat motiveert leiders hun ondergeschikte te empoweren?*

Het empoweren van werknemers is in de afgelopen decennia steeds populairder geworden. Tegenwoordig hebben meer dan 70 % van de organisaties een vorm van empowerment in hun beleid opgenomen. Om succesvol te kunnen zijn hebben bedrijven het volle potentieel van hun werknemers nodig. Om dit te bereiken, kunnen organisaties hun werknemers empoweren om zelf initiatieven te nemen om het bedrijf het beste te kunnen dienen. In dit proefschrift proberen we het fenomeen van empowerment beter te begrijpen. Onze doel is de antecedenten van leider empowerment gedrag beter te begrijpen. Daardoor willen we het gebrek aan onderzoek in de antecedenten van leider empowerment gedrag opvullen.

Dit proefschrift bestaat uit 5 hoofdstukken. Wij rapporteren de resultaten van 4 laboratorium onderzoeken en 2 veldstudies in hoofdstuk 2 tot 4. Ondanks dat deze hoofdstukken onderling een samenhangend geheel vormen, kan elk hoofdstuk ook als onafhankelijk artikel gelezen

worden. Hoofdstuk 5 is een samenvatting van de resultaten die in hoofdstuk 2 tot 4 zijn gerapporteerd.

**Hoofdstuk 2:** het centrale doel van dit hoofdstuk was de eerste steen te leggen van onze redenering door te laten zien dat vertrouwen een antecedent is van leider empowerment gedrag en dat leiderseigenschappen de invloed van vertrouwen in het empowerment proces modereren. We hebben op leiderseigenschappen (consciëntieusheid) en leidersvertrouwen in de ondergeschikte integriteit en performance als antecedenten van leider empowerment gedrag gefocust. Wij hebben onze hypothesen in twee laboratoriumonderzoeken getoetst: een experimenteel onderzoek (studie 1) en een scenario-onderzoek (studie 2). Wij voorspelden dat leider empowerment gedrag niet alleen afhankelijk is van het vertrouwen dat leiders hebben in de integriteit en performance van hun ondergeschikte maar ook van de eigenschappen van de leider: leider-consciëntieusheid. In studie 1 hebben wij eerst een aspect van empowerment gedrag onderzocht (het delegeren van verantwoordelijkheden). In studie 2 hebben wij de resultaten van studie 1 gerepliceerd en uitgebreid door de 6 dimensies van empowerment gedrag (Konczac et al., 2000) te gebruiken. De resultaten van beide studies laten zien dat hoog consciëntieuze leiders hun ondergeschikte meer empoweren wanneer ze meer vertrouwen hebben in de integriteit en performance van hun werknemers, terwijl leiders die lager scoren op consciëntieusheid hun beslissing nemen om hun ondergeschikte te empoweren op basis van hun vertrouwen in de integriteit van hun werknemers en de performance van hun werknemers minder in overweging nemen .

**Hoofdstuk 3:** In dit hoofdstuk keken wij naar de invloed van vertrouwen en epistemic motivatie op het empowerment proces. Wij focusten op twee aspecten van epistemic motivatie: werkdruk en aansprakelijkheid. Leiders worden dagelijks geconfronteerd met situaties die hun wil, om

zorgvuldig versus haastige beslissingen te nemen, beïnvloeden. In de context van empowerment leiderschap, zou dit kunnen betekenen dat, afhankelijk van hun niveau van epistemic leiderschap, leiders meer of minder gemotiveerd zouden worden om de betrouwbaarheid van hun volgers te overwegen. Wij hebben onze hypothesen in drie onderzoeken getoetst. Wij hebben eerst aansprakelijkheid (studie 1) en werkdruk (studie 2) in twee scenario studies gemanipuleerd, om conclusies over causaliteit te kunnen nemen. Vervolgens hebben wij de gebeurtenis van de voorspelde relatie in het veld (studie 3) onderzocht, daarmee bepalend de onafhankelijke contributie van de voorspelde relaties in het empowerment proces. In studie 1 hebben we laten zien dat aansprakelijkheid interacteert met volgersbetrouwbaarheid om leider empowerment gedrag zodanig te beïnvloeden dat leiders die veel aansprakelijkheid ervaren meer rekening zullen houden met de betrouwbaarheid van volgers dan leiders die minder aansprakelijkheid ervaren. In studie 2 hebben we laten zien dat werkdruk interacteert met volgersbetrouwbaarheid om leider empowerment gedrag zodanig te beïnvloeden dat leiders die veel werkdruk ervaren minder rekening zullen houden met de betrouwbaarheid van volgers dan leiders die minder werkdruk ervaren. In studie 3 repliceerden wij de resultaten van studie 1 en studie 2 in een veldstudie.

**Hoofdstuk 4:** In dit hoofdstuk hebben wij gefocust op de rol van gender in het empowerment proces. Wij hebben ook de mediërende rol van vertrouwen benadrukt. Het centrale doel van deze paper was te begrijpen hoe gender de motivatie achter leider empowerment gedrag beïnvloedt om het fenomeen achter leiderschap effectiviteit beter te begrijpen. Gender is breed onderzocht geweest in de context van de organisatie en onderzoek heeft laten zien dat mannen en vrouwen niet onder dezelfde druk staan, waardoor vrouwelijke leiders meer dan mannen moeten bewijzen dat zij gekwalificeerde leiders zijn. Wij voorspelde dat dit de bereidheid van vrouwelijke leiders om in een kwetsbare positie te zijn zou

beïnvloeden; vooral vrouwen die meer gemotiveerd zijn om het goed te doen. Vervolgens hebben we ook naar de invloed van de voorspelde relaties op twee uitkomstvariabelen gekeken: volgerswerktevredenheid en organisatorische volgersbetrokkenheid. De resultaten laten zien dat gender gemodereerd wordt door het niveau van leidersconsciëntieusheid, het leider empowerment gedrag beïnvloedde en dat de relatie tussen gender van de leider en consciëntieusheid van de leider was gemedieerd door het vertrouwen dat leiders hadden in hun volgers. Meer in het bijzonder, laten onze resultaten zien dat vrouwelijke leiders meer terughoudend zijn wanneer ze hun volgers moeten vertrouwen, en als gevolg daarvan minder geneigd zijn om hun volgers te empoweren. Vervolgens, laten wij zien dat gender van de leider gemodereerd wordt door het consciëntieusheidniveau van leiders en dat dit de werktevredenheid en betrokkenheid van volgers beïnvloedt. Wij tonen ook aan dat deze relatie gemedieerd wordt door leider empowerment gedrag. De resultaten bevestigden onze hypothesen en laten zien dat hoe meer ze empowered waren, des te meer ze tevreden waren met hun werk en betrokken met de organisatie. Volgers waren minder tevreden met hun werk en minder betrokken met de organisatie wanneer hun leider een vrouw was dan wanneer hun leider was een man.

**Hoofdstuk 5:** Dit hoofdstuk bestaat uit een samenvatting van de belangrijkste inzichten van hoofdstuk 2 tot en met 4 en probeerde die in een globale conclusie te integreren. In dit hoofdstuk zal men een algemene discussie vinden over de antecedenten van leider empowerment gedrag waarin de sterke en zwakke punten van dit onderzoek besproken worden. Ook zullen praktische en theoretische implicaties besproken worden.

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Natalia Hakimi was born on October the 20<sup>th</sup> 1978 in Reims (France). She received her baccalauréat scientifique from the Lycée Jean Zay in Orléans (France) in 1997. In 1997, she started her study Psychology at the University François Rabelais in Tours (France). In 1998 she went to the Katholieke Universiteit

Nijmegen as an exchange student, with a grant from the Erasmus Programme. She graduated in social psychology from the Radboud University Nijmegen in 2004. In July 2005, she started a PhD project on the antecedents of leader empowering behaviour at the department of Organization and Personnel Management of the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

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## LEADER EMPOWERING BEHAVIOUR: THE LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE UNDERSTANDING THE MOTIVATION BEHIND LEADER EMPOWERING BEHAVIOUR

The present dissertation tries to shed light on the phenomenon of empowering leadership. We aim to understand the antecedents of leader empowering behaviour. In doing so, we mean to remedy the stated lack of research on empowering leadership and on the effect of follower's behaviour on leader's behaviour. In this dissertation we will argue that follower's behaviour can be expected to play an important role in explaining leader's empowering behaviour. We report the findings of 4 laboratory studies and two field studies. As a first step in our reasoning we start by establishing trust as an antecedent of leader empowering behaviour and showing that leader's characteristics moderate the influence of trust in the empowering process. We then investigate the influence of trust and epistemic motivation in the empowering process. We focused on two aspects of epistemic motivation: accountability and workload. We finally investigate the influence of trust and gender in the empowering process, emphasizing the mediating role of trust in the process.

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Erasmus School of Economics (ESE)  
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The Netherlands

Tel. +31 10 408 11 82  
Fax +31 10 408 96 40  
E-mail [info@erim.eur.nl](mailto:info@erim.eur.nl)  
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